

# Access & Opportunity

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Moving Connecticut Forward

*December 6, 2018*

CSCU

*Connecticut State  
Colleges & Universities*



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## **Acknowledgements:**

*This publication would not have been possible without the submissions received from students, faculty, staff, administrators, Board members, and other stakeholders from all 17 of our institutions. These submissions provided crucial information on the challenges and opportunities of all our students and institutions. In addition, these submissions helped to foster a sense of common values, experiences, and vision for the future of the CSCU system.*

### **Principal Author**

*Sean Bradbury*

### **Editor**

*Carl Lovitt, Ph.D.*

### **Layout**

*Andrew Morris*

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# Mission Statements

## CSCU Mission

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities contribute to the creation of knowledge and the economic growth of the state of Connecticut by providing affordable, innovative, and rigorous programs. Our learning environments transform students and enable over 140,000 Connecticut residents annually to pursue their personal and career goals. CSCU has five goals that focus on access, affordability, student success, innovation and economic growth, and equity.

## Connecticut State Universities

The four Connecticut State Universities offer exemplary and affordable undergraduate and graduate instruction leading to degrees in the liberal arts, sciences, fine arts, applied fields, and professional disciplines. They contribute to the advancement of knowledge, research, learning, and culture, while preparing students to enter the workforce and to contribute to the civic life of Connecticut's communities. Through a variety of living and learning environments, the universities ensure access and serve the needs of a richly diverse student body. They support an atmosphere of inter-campus learning, the exploration of technological and global influences, and the application of knowledge to promote economic growth and social justice.

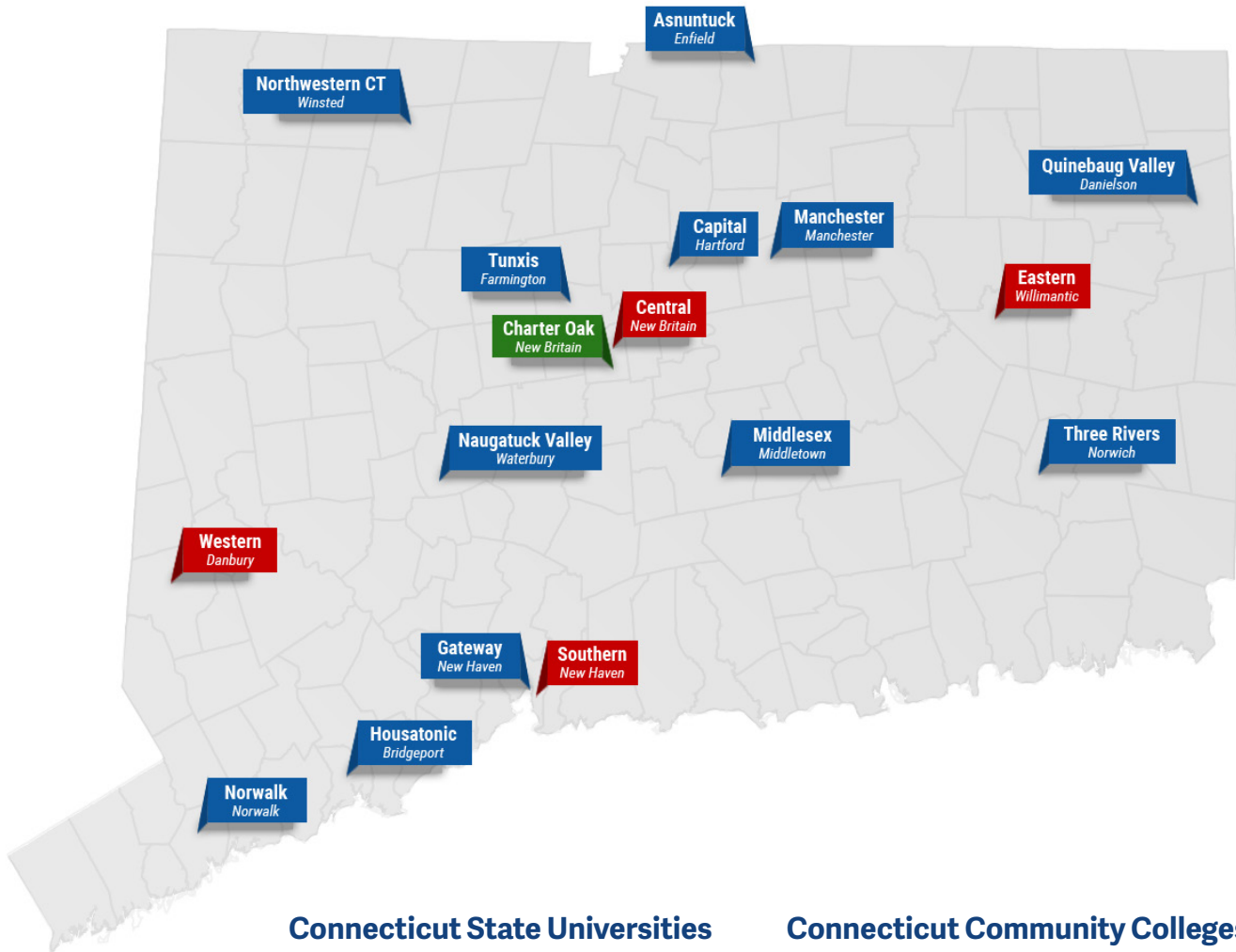
## Connecticut Community Colleges

The 12 Connecticut Community Colleges share a mission to make quality higher education and lifelong learning affordable and accessible. Through unique and comprehensive degree and certificate programs, non-credit lifelong learning opportunities, and job skills training programs, they advance student aspirations to earn career-oriented degrees and certificates and to pursue their further education. The colleges nurture student learning and success to transform students and equip them to contribute to the economic, intellectual, civic, cultural, and social well-being of their communities. In doing so, the colleges supply the state, its businesses and other enterprises, and its citizens with a skilled, well-trained, and educated workforce.

## Charter Oak State College

Charter Oak State College—the state's only public, online, degree-granting institution—provides affordable, diverse, and alternative opportunities for adults to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates. The college validates students' prior learning acquired through traditional and non-traditional experiences and delivers the remaining coursework for them to complete degrees. The college rigorously upholds standards of high quality and seeks to inspire adults with the self-enrichment potential of non-traditional higher education.

# CSCU Institutions



## Connecticut State Universities

Central Connecticut State University  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
Southern Connecticut State University  
Western Connecticut State University

## Charter Oak State College

## Connecticut Community Colleges

Asnuntuck Community College  
Capital Community College  
Gateway Community College  
Housatonic Community College  
Manchester Community College  
Middlesex Community College  
Naugatuck Valley Community College  
Northwestern CT Community College  
Norwalk Community College  
Quinebaug Valley Community College  
Three Rivers Community College  
Tunxis Community College

# Leadership

## Mark E. Ojakian

*President, CSCU*

## Jane McBride Gates

*Provost & Senior VP Academic & Student Affairs*

### Board of Regents

Matt Fleury (Chair)  
Merle W. Harris (Vice Chair)  
Richard J. Balducci  
Aviva D. Budd  
Naomi K. Cohen  
Felice Gray-Kemp  
Holly Howery  
David R. Jimenez  
Pete Rosa  
JoAnn Ryan  
Elease E. Wright

### Ex-Officio Members

Delwyn F. Cummings  
*Professor of Chemistry, NVCC*

William Lugo  
*Professor of Sociology and Criminology, ECSU*

Raul Pino  
*Department of Public Health*

Catherine Smith  
*Department of Economic and Community Development*

Dianna R. Wentzell  
*Department of Education*

Kurt Westby  
*Department of Labor*

### Campus Leaders

James Lombella  
*Asnuntuck Community College*

G. Duncan Harris  
*Capital Community College*

Zulma Toro  
*Central Connecticut State University*

Ed Klonoski  
*Charter Oak State College*

Elsa Núñez  
*Eastern Connecticut State University*

Paul Broadie II (interim)  
*Gateway Community College*

Paul Broadie II  
*Housatonic Community College*

Tanya Millner-Harlee  
*Manchester Community College*

Steven Minkler  
*Middlesex Community College*

Daisy Cocco De Filippis  
*Naugatuck Valley Community College*

Michael Rooke  
*Northwestern CT Community College*

David L. Levinson  
*Norwalk Community College*

Carlee Drummer  
*Quinebaug Valley Community College*

Joe Bertolino  
*Southern Connecticut State University*

Mary Ellen Jukoski  
*Three Rivers Community College*

James Lombella (interim)  
*Tunxis Community College*

John B. Clark  
*Western Connecticut State University*

# Executive Summary

*As the new administration of Governor-Elect Ned Lamont and new General Assembly members get ready to face Connecticut's challenges, it is incumbent upon us at the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities to help them succeed. To that end, we solicited input from stakeholders across all 17 institutions to put together a primer on who we are, the challenges we face, and the solutions needed to address them.*

## Who We Are

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) educate more students than any other institution in our state. The size, geographic reach, and diversity of our programs and talent give CSCU the flexibility and scalability to be an essential partner in any initiative that drives the economic growth of the state and the continued professional and personal growth of Connecticut residents.

As of the fall 2018 semester, CSCU serves more than 140,000 undergraduate and graduate students in hundreds of academic fields, with credentials ranging from certificates in fields as varied as manufacturing technology, cyber security, and allied health, to doctoral degrees in nursing, education, and social work. Ninety-five percent (95%) of these students are current Connecticut residents who are building their futures in our state. We educate 40% of all the higher education students and 68% of all the public higher education students in Connecticut.

CSCU's mission is to promote the education of Connecticut residents and improve economic growth through affordable, innovative, and rigorous academic programs. As public institutions of higher education, we are positioned to make sure that all residents of the state have access to the educational opportunities they need and deserve. No other educational institution serves Connecticut in this way.

For students and taxpayers alike, CSCU represents a phenomenal return on investment. For every dollar our students invest in their education, they will garner \$6.60 in higher future earnings, with an average annual rate of return of 22.2%. For every \$1 of public funding in CSCU, the state will receive \$3.80 in added tax revenue and public sector savings.

## Our Challenges

The single greatest challenge facing our institutions has been insufficient funding to make the critical investments that our students and our institutions need to thrive. The lack of funding is driven by two distinct factors: eroding state support and declining enrollment.

Successive years of budget cuts since 2015, as well as rescissions, lapses, and holdbacks, have reduced CSCU's state appropriations from \$351.99M to \$286.23M, a 19% reduction. These budget cuts are compounded by a 9% reduction in enrollment overall since 2013, and the associated loss of tuition and fee revenues.

CSCU provides affordable and accessible learning to students no matter how much they or their families earn. A large number of our students require assistance from state or federal financial aid to pursue an education. In 2017, 48% of our community college students and 35% of our university students received a Pell grant, while 31% of community college students



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## Executive Summary (cont.)

received the maximum amount. Over 8,000 students receive nearly \$20M in Roberta B. Willis Scholarship awards from the state annually.

Despite these resources, more and more of our students and their families, particularly at the university level, are taking on significant debt to finance their educations. Narrowing attainment gaps and increasing completion rates will depend on making college affordable, providing necessary supports, and offering flexible schedules and more online options for working adult students. Understanding the challenges our students face will help policymakers identify the

resources and policies needed to help them overcome barriers to completion.

CSCU has already taken decisive steps, through our Students First plan, to ensure that the promise of our institutions is there for future generations of Connecticut residents. Out of necessity, our institutions have had to find new ways of educating and serving students with ever-diminishing resources. This has required fundamentally rethinking the way we deliver instruction and services, manage our resources, and govern our institutions.

## Policy and Funding Solutions

CSCU has identified for continuing discussion, a number of innovative solutions to the challenges we face. Implementing any of these will require additional resources from policymakers.

### Free or Reduced Tuition Models

Among the options for keeping public higher education affordable, CSCU and the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) are exploring the following revised tuition and fee proposals:

- Hold tuition and fees flat at FY19 rates. Requires a state investment of \$15.7M in FY20 and \$31.9M in FY20 and FY21
- Guarantee a tuition/fee flat rate to full-time students for the duration of their enrollment.
- Guarantee that students who complete a community college associate's degree will continue paying the same tuition when they transfer to one of our four-year institutions to pursue a bachelor's degree
- Refund a percentage of students' educational costs upon graduation
- Offer the last semester of students' education free to incentivize completion
- Establish a student loan forgiveness or tax credit program for students who earn a certificate or degree in Connecticut and work in the nonprofit or public sector or who find employment in high-demand fields
- Fund a statewide Promise program, building off initiatives in cities like New Haven and Hartford.



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## Executive Summary (cont.)

### Student Support Investments

Successive budget cuts have eroded critical supports that our institutions and students need. In its recent budget request to OPM, the CSCU Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) identified specific investments to ensure that our students receive the support they need to succeed:

- \$13M for advisors at the community colleges and \$8M for advisors at the universities to ensure that our students get the supports they need to be successful
- \$25M to hire over 200 full-time faculty at the community colleges to provide counseling and support to their students beyond classroom hours.

### Expansion of Roberta Willis Scholarship and Work Study Programs

The state's investment in the Roberta Willis merit- and need-based scholarship program has dramatically improved the lives of our students. We propose to expand the scholarship funding to cover non-credit programs that train our students for jobs in high-need areas throughout the state. A publicly supported work-study fund would also enable students to acquire job skills while pursuing their education.

### Partnerships with K-12

Expanding pathways from high school to higher education is essential for Connecticut to reach its goals of increasing college completion rates, closing the attainment gap, and increasing high school student engagement. Implementing the following recommendations will help the state attain those goals:

- Expand dual enrollment programs that enable high school students to enroll in college-level courses and earn both high school and college credit, often at greatly reduced costs. Given the impressive work that the state has done to promote high school graduation, investment in dual enrollment through grants to school districts could build on that success and encourage students to earn college credit while still enrolled in their districts
- Given the state's emphasis on pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, the model of concurrent enrollment supports students who simultaneously are in high school and college programs. Neither the school districts nor the colleges currently have funding to support expansion of these programs. The state could address this issue with dedicated resources for these types of high school and college partnerships.

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## Executive Summary (cont.)

### Partnerships with Business

CSCU has been dedicated to addressing the needs of business and industry for a skilled workforce. The state can help us to meet employer demand by partnering to promote internships for all Connecticut college students. Early exposure to employment opportunities while in higher education programs can help students and businesses to see their future in Connecticut. With support from the new administration and legislature, our colleges and universities can also address the incumbent worker training needs of the state's small- and medium-sized employers.

### Capital Projects

Currently, state law allows CSCU to self-administer construction projects only when the project is valued at less than \$2M, with all other projects managed by the Department of Construction Services (DCS), a division of the Department of Administrative Services. CSCU seeks the same authorization as the University of Connecticut to administer its own construction projects.

- CSCU can save taxpayers an estimated \$4.38M, annually by assuming some of the functions currently performed by DCS, as recommended in prior DCS and CSCU assessments
- CSCU and taxpayers lose 3% in annual construction inflationary costs for every year a project is delayed.

## Moving Forward

Access and affordability remain paramount to our mission and student success. We cannot continue to ask our students and their families to absorb the cost of our budget deficits. As enrollment challenges have hit nearly every institution in our system, we have worked to better coordinate our enrollment and marketing strategies. We are exploring ways to attract more nontraditional students like adult learners with flexible schedules. And we are making progress on better outreach to guidance counselors and other K12 groups across the state. We have accomplished some amazing things to help generate student success and make our campuses a home for everyone.

We are making structural changes for the future and we can accelerate our efforts with support from the next administration and legislature. Every day, our institutions partner with our local communities and businesses to produce not just the next generation of Connecticut's workforce but the leaders and informed citizens we need for the future of Connecticut.

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# Introduction

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) educate more students than any other institution in the state. Students earn undergraduate and graduate degrees in hundreds of academic fields, including doctoral degrees in nursing, education, and social work, as well certificates in fields as varied as manufacturing technology, cyber security, and allied health.

We have a mission to promote the education of Connecticut residents and the economic growth of the state through affordable, innovative, and rigorous programs. As public institutions of higher education, we are positioned to make sure that all residents of the state have access to the educational opportunities they want and deserve. No other educational institution serves the state and its citizens in this way.

As the new administration of Governor-Elect Lamont and the newly elected General Assembly prepare to take leadership of the state and put their policy and budget ideas to paper, we want to ensure there is an awareness of CSCU's contributions to helping more than 140,000 students each year reach their professional and personal goals and, equally important, to supporting the economic vitality of the state. We will also set forth the challenges currently faced by the system and its students and how strategic investments can propel our system forward and make it a key driver in addressing the workforce needs of Connecticut's employers. There are thousands more job openings across the state than there are qualified workers to fill them. CSCU is the key to filling this gap.

**CSCU Serves More Than 140,000 Students Each Year**

To that end, in August, we began the process of soliciting feedback from all of our institutions and as many stakeholders as possible. Collectively, we have put together this primer on who we are as a system, what our challenges are, how we can face them, and what the future holds for us and the state. This primer does not contain everything that policymakers need to know about our students and our institutions. Nor does it present all of the solutions to our challenges, but it rather is meant as a springboard for partnerships, discussions, and innovative approaches between CSCU and policymakers to support our students and the state economy.

We stand ready to assist policymakers across the state, across party lines, and across branches of government to develop any proposals aimed at improving the lives of our students and the state that we serve.

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# Background on CSCU

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) are a system of 17 public colleges and universities across Connecticut, under the governing authority of the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR). There are three constituent units of CSCU: the four Connecticut state universities (CSU), the 12 Connecticut community colleges (CCC), and Charter Oak State College (COSC).

The CSCU system as we know it today came into existence in 2011. That year, the three previously separate Boards of the Connecticut State University System, the Community-Technical Colleges, and Charter Oak State College were consolidated into one system with a single Board of Regents. A single administrative system office was created to provide overall support, promote collaboration, improve transfer among institutions, and achieve administrative efficiencies and financial opportunities. Being a single system has allowed CSCU to leverage our collective talent to ensure the continued access, affordability, and student success that our institutions deliver.

## **CSCU is Comprised of 17 Public Institutions**

- 4 State Universities**
- 12 Community Colleges**
- Charter Oak State College**

The BOR has 21 members consisting of 15 voting members (9 appointed by the Governor, 4 by legislative leaders, and 2 by students) and six non-voting ex-officio members, including two representatives from the Faculty Advisory Committee. Administration, oversight, support, and coordination of CSCU are carried out through the President of CSCU and the System Office.

The BOR studies and considers the needs of Connecticut's residents and industry and establishes strategies to achieve them; sets statewide tuition and student fee policies; establishes financial aid policies; reviews, licenses, and accredits academic programs; and, in collaboration with institutional stakeholders, conducts searches for and selects campus leadership. In addition to governance responsibilities, the BOR also holds broad responsibilities for development and coordination of higher education policy across our institutions.

Our institutions aspire to reach five goals established by the BOR:

- Increase the number of students who successfully complete a first year of college
- Graduate more students with the knowledge and skills to achieve their life and career goals
- Maximize access to higher education by making attendance affordable and our institutions financially sustainable
- Create educational environments that cultivate innovation and prepare students for successful careers in a fast changing world
- Eliminate achievement disparities among different ethnic/racial, economic, and gender groups.

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## Background (cont.)

The colleges and universities contribute to the overall system mission and goals through a variety of certificates and degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as through career advancement and lifelong learning opportunities. The different missions of the comprehensive regional universities, community colleges, and Charter Oak State College ensure that the state has the broadest range of educational opportunities available to its residents and that the state's businesses benefit from graduates who have both cutting-edge career training and well-rounded liberal arts educations.

As of the fall 2018 semester, the system serves more than 140,000 undergraduate and graduate students through non-credit, certificate, and degree programs. Ninety-five percent (95%) of these students are current Connecticut residents who are building their futures in our state. We educate 40% of all the higher education students and 68% of all the public higher education students in Connecticut. No other higher education institution improves more lives and serves more communities

across the state than CSCU. Fulfilling their founding missions and public purpose as defined by the State of Connecticut, these institutions are the bedrock of higher education and opportunity in Connecticut.

The size, geographic reach, and diversity of CSCU's programs and talent provide the flexibility and scalability to be an essential partner in any initiative to improve the economic growth and vitality of the state and the continued professional and personal growth of its residents. The Planning Commission for Higher Education in its February 20, 2015, *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Connecticut*<sup>1</sup> set a 70% postsecondary attainment goal for Connecticut and estimated that the state would have to produce 300,000 more graduates than anticipated to achieve that goal. The Master Plan also identifies as a priority the goal of reducing the attainment gap between white students and students of color from 29% to 15% by 2025. CSCU is a key asset in the effort to meet these goals now and into the future.

**95% of CSCU  
Students are from  
Connecticut**

<sup>1</sup> Planning Commission for Higher Education. Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Connecticut. Connecticut General Assembly. 20 February 2015: 7. <http://www2.cbia.com/govaff/pdf/2015/highereducationcommission.pdf>

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# The Students We Serve

Our students are the future of Connecticut. More than 95% of them are Connecticut residents, and more than 76% of them are working in state within nine months of graduation. They are the sons and daughters of our working- and middle-class residents, and many of them are first-generation college students, who will go on to start jobs and families of their own in Connecticut. Investing time, energy, and resources in our students is an investment in the future of our state.

Every day, our faculty and staff get to see firsthand how the power of our colleges and universities transforms lives and communities. Our institutions cultivate free speech, creativity, innovation, cultural differences, and sometimes the intellectual disruption needed for individuals to evolve and grow.

*"I never thought I would be able to attend a college, I was out on my own at 16, and forced out of high school a half a year early. I've transitioned from a student who was told to 'just drop out' by his principal, to a proud member of the President's Circle"*

*Dominc – Naugatuck Valley Community College*

At CSCU, one of our greatest assets is the diversity of our students, faculty, staff, and leadership. We are strengthened by the various races, ages, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, nationalities, physical abilities, and political perspectives that define our campus communities. Our campuses thrive when people from different backgrounds, walks of life, and perspectives have an opportunity for civil discourse and exchange of ideas by learning together. That is the true value of a higher education.

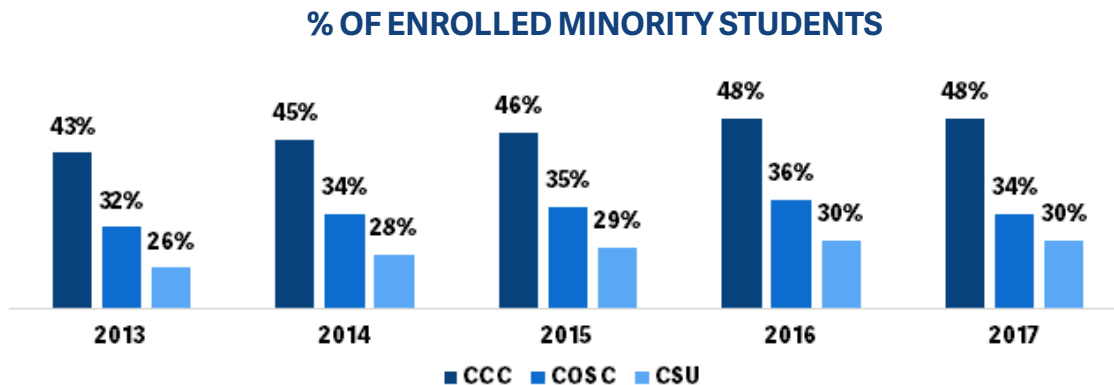
We are all committed to creating lifelong learners. Whether they are recent high school graduates beginning their higher education, veterans looking to build on their military experience to earn a degree, employees seeking to stay competitive midcareer, or retirees looking for fulfilling and engaging learning, CSCU is here to support them.

Women make up 60% of our students. A growing number of our students are older, nontraditional students. More than 1,700 veterans are currently enrolled across CSCU. The proportion of our student body that is traditional age (less than 24 years old) ranges from 74.3% at the CSUs, to 61.3% at the CCCs, and as low as 8.7% at COSC. More than half of our total student population attends school part-time: 26% percent at the universities and 67% at the community colleges.

Reflecting the breadth of Connecticut's population, the ethnic diversity of our student body has steadily increased. Whereas the statewide proportion of minority students stands at 33%, the percentage of students of color at the CCCs has increased over the last five years from 43% to 48%, while at the CSUs the proportion has increased from 26% to 30%, and at COSC the proportion has increased from 32% to 34%.

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## The Students We Serve (cont.)



Our institutions provide affordable and accessible learning to students no matter how much they or their families earn. A large number of our students require assistance from state or federal financial aid to pursue an education. In fall 2017, 48% of our community college students and 35% of our university students received a Pell grant, while 31% of community college students received the maximum amount under Pell. Additionally, over 8,000 students receive nearly \$20M in Roberta B. Willis Scholarship awards from the state of Connecticut annually. Despite these resources, more and more of our students and their families, particularly at the university level, are taking on significant debt to finance their educations.

We welcome students regardless of the language they speak, or their citizenship status. We were proud to support PA 18-2 last year, which opened up institutional aid to undocumented Connecticut residents. In 2016, Eastern was one of two universities in the country selected by TheDream.US for a groundbreaking private scholarship program that allows undocumented students from “lockout” states to attend the university. These students are high achievers who are making the most of this educational opportunity.

We also serve students regardless of their existing or prior incarceration status. When the federal government provided an opportunity for institutions to offer the Second Chance Pell pilot programs, four of our community colleges were selected, along with 63 others nationally, to be part of the pilot that allowed eligible Americans to access Pell funding while incarcerated. As part of the pilot, Asnuntuck, Middlesex, Quinebaug, and Three Rivers Community Colleges began offering combinations of classroom-based instruction and online education at nearby correctional facilities. The Second Chance Pell pilot program has helped 962 students pursue a postsecondary education.

As part of our commitment to provide learning opportunities to all Connecticut residents, we have thousands of high school students earning college credits through dual enrollment programs. For instance, high school students participate in the College Connections manufacturing programs through a grant from the state Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), as well as in our Early College Opportunity (ECO) partnership with IBM and Electric Boat that exposes students to the latest technology and career opportunities.



# Value of CSCU for our Students

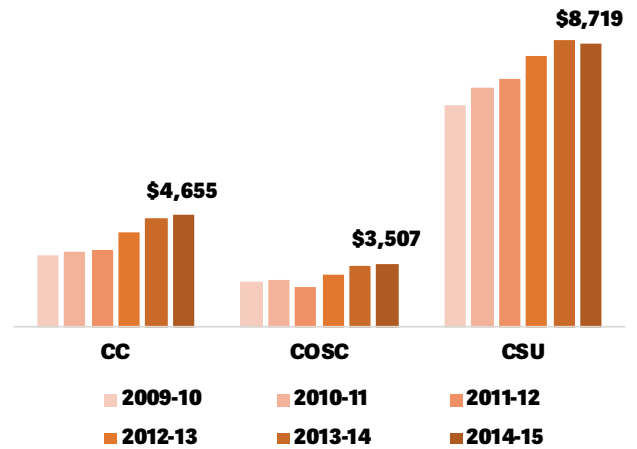
Connecticut's Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network (P20 WIN) is a collaborative that links education and workforce data among state agencies to help better align and improve efforts. The latest P20 WIN analysis (*Connecticut State Colleges & Universities Employment & Wages Summary Report Graduates from 2009-10 to 2016-17*<sup>2</sup>) on employment and wage outcomes documents the extent to which CSCU students increase their earning power when they complete their education from one of our colleges or universities.

Whether it is an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a doctorate, students earn more with a degree from CSCU. In looking at the earnings of graduates pre- and post-CSCU credential from the 2014-2015 academic year, P20 WIN's data show that graduates from COSC saw their median quarterly wages increase by \$3,507, community college graduates saw an increase of \$4,655, while CSU graduates saw the greatest quarterly wage increase at \$8,719.

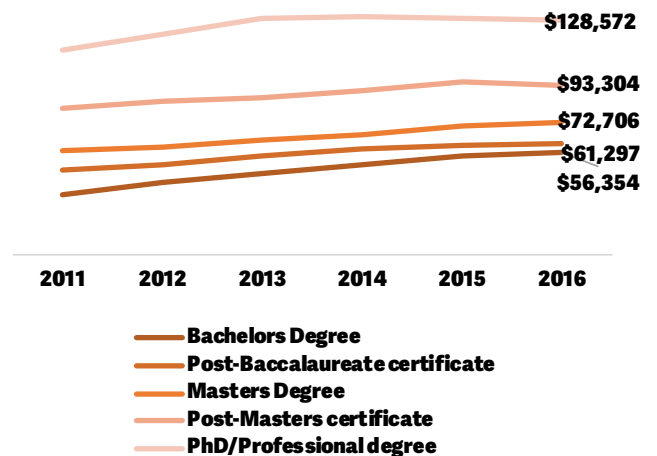
The same report found that the more time required by a credential (i.e., a doctorate versus a bachelor's degree), the greater the annual wages a graduate will earn.

Additionally, a system-wide economic impact study conducted by labor market advisors at Emsi found that "altogether, CSCU's FY 2016-17 students will receive \$7 billion in higher future earnings over their working lives as a result of their education and training at CSCU." This is a phenomenal return on investment for our students. For every dollar they invest in their education, they will garner \$6.60 in higher future earnings, with an average annual rate of return of 22.2%.

## CHANGE IN MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES 2 YEARS AFTER GRADUATION



## ACTUAL WAGES EARNED BY CSCU GRADUATES



<sup>2</sup> P20 WIN. Connecticut State Colleges & Universities Employment & Wages Summary Report Graduates from 2009-10 to 2016-17. September 2018. <http://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/P20%20WIN%200014%20SumRpt%2020180921-Final.pdf>

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# Value of CSCU for Connecticut

Beyond the value that our institutions create for students, they make significant contributions to their local communities and to the state at large. All across Connecticut, our institutions serve as major employers and anchors for the communities they serve. They are centers of culture, learning, gathering, and enrichment for everyone—not just for students, faculty, and staff.

As part of our commitment to give back, our campus members are heavily involved in volunteering in the communities we serve. Our faculty and administrators serve on boards and commissions, they volunteer their time and expertise on local initiatives, and they provide arts and cultural programming for the public. With a solid grounding in the liberal arts, our students acquire the skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and communication to contribute to their communities

as engaged and informed citizens. Many of our

students participate in service-learning projects in the

community as part of their education. Nursing students provide free health screenings; many students tutor local schoolchildren, help with income tax preparation, and participate in community clean-up or food drives.

**For every \$1 of public funding for CSCU, Connecticut receives \$3.80 in added tax revenue**

While the nonmonetary benefits are impossible to quantify and value, the study conducted by Emsi helped put a number on our economic impact. The study presented revealing insights into the impact of our colleges and universities on local and statewide economies. Here are a few of the key takeaways from the FY2016-17 report:

- Our institutions spend \$980.1M on operations annually
  - \$871.5M in payroll for 10,644 employees
  - \$342.4M in day-to-day expenses related to facilities, supplies, and professional services
- Research spending amounted to \$5.3M in payroll, supplies, and equipment
- CSCU construction projects supported \$29.4M in added income for Connecticut
- Spending by out-of-state visitors generated by our institutions added approximately \$5.6M in income to Connecticut's economy
- Student spending from out-of-state students and retained in-state students added \$137.9M in income.

The most eye-opening statistic from the economic impact study may be the return on investment for every dollar spent by taxpayers on a CSCU education. For every \$1 of public funding in CSCU, the state will receive \$3.80 in added tax revenue and public sector savings over the course of that student's career.

In addition to the economic value our institutions create, our graduates help businesses and industry add value to the economy, particularly in high-demand fields. From 2013 through 2017, our institutions collectively

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## Value of CSCU for Connecticut (cont.)

awarded 28,824 degrees and certificates in high-demand areas like education, healthcare, and STEM. Degrees and certificates in high-demand fields constitute almost 38% of all CCC and CSU awards, and 8% of all COSC awards. Within three quarters of earning their credential, 75% or more of CSCU students in these fields are gainfully employed in the State of Connecticut. These high-demand awards help our students secure a career and help Connecticut's economy stay competitive in the 21st century (for more info see CSCU's *2017 Accountability Report* for the Higher Education Coordinating Council) <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. 2017 Accountability Report. October 2018.  
<http://www.ct.edu/files/opr/CSCU%20Accountability%20Report%20AY2017.pdf>

# Challenges Our Students Face

To meet the ambitious enrollment goals of the *Connecticut Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*, the state's colleges and universities will need to educate substantially more students who have not historically attended or completed college: older students, working adults, first-generation students, low-income students, and students from minority populations. Such students already represent a significant percentage of the CSCU student population. For many of these students, the CSCU colleges and universities represent the only avenue to higher education in Connecticut and to improved employment opportunities. Providing access to college for these students is at the core of the CSCU mission. Doing so is also vitally important to the state's economic future.

However, unlike many students who grow up in financially stable, college-going households, many of our students face challenges and barriers that impede their ability to complete college, many of which are beyond their control. Colleges and universities need to meet those students where they are for them to succeed. Narrowing attainment gaps and increasing completion rates will depend on making college affordable, providing necessary supports, and addressing the needs of students who are not academically prepared for college-level work. The CSCU colleges and universities are devoted to helping our students overcome barriers to their successful completion. Understanding the challenges our students face will help policymakers identify the resources and policies needed to help them flourish.

**Most CSCU Students work full- or part-time jobs, and many support other family members**

Ensuring the affordability of higher education must become a top priority if we are to serve sufficient students to meet the state's workforce needs. Many CSCU students experience extreme financial exigencies. A 2017 survey administered by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) found that 17% of our community college students face housing insecurity or homelessness<sup>4</sup>. Faculty and staff regularly hear from students who attend college even though they can only afford to live in cars and "couch surf" at friends' or relatives' homes, because they know that education is their only path to a better future. An even greater number of our students face food insecurity. A national survey of 33,000 students at 70 community colleges in 26 states found that two out of three community college students were food insecure ("Hungry and Homeless in College," Wisconsin HOPE Lab, March 2017)<sup>5</sup>. CSCU and CCEH are working together to develop a protocol for linking colleges to the regional housing resources available for students. Every CSCU campus also has initiatives underway to address student hunger, and a majority of our campuses have food pantries open to our students.

<sup>4</sup> Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Homelessness and Housing Instability In Connecticut Colleges and Universities. July 2018. <http://www.cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/FINAL-FINAL-CSCU-Youth-Count-Data-Report-July-9-2018.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education. Wisconsin HOPE Lab. (2017) <https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf>

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## Challenges Our Students Face (cont.)

According to the Wisconsin HOPE Lab report, nearly a third of students with food insecurities were employed or receiving financial aid. Many of our students who do not qualify for Pell grants have considerable unmet financial need. Most CSCU students work full- or part-time jobs, and many support other family members. The cost of attending college can place a significant burden on a family's resources. Having to repay loans may cause graduates to put off other important purchases. Policies and resources to alleviate the financial burden of attending a public college or university will remove a significant barrier to students' access and success.

Many of our students must contribute to their family income and must balance those responsibilities with class schedules, study, and in some cases internships or clinical requirements for their programs. For students who are also the primary caretakers for young children in their families, finding reliable, affordable, and safe childcare can be a challenge. Most students must pay out of pocket for these critical services, making it difficult to enroll and complete their programs in a timely fashion. We have been working collaboratively with the Office of Early Childhood to promote policy and funding changes that support the provision of childcare for students while they are in school, but we need a broader discussion with the administration and legislators about how to provide childcare services on all of our campuses. Having childcare facilities on site can mean the difference between going to college or not for a parenting student.

Another important priority for our public colleges and universities will be to ensure that we can provide the guidance and support on our campuses that our students need to be successful. Often the first in their families to attend college, many of our students experience college as an unfamiliar and intimidating culture. They may not have a parent or relative to guide them through the college application process or to help them complete financial aid forms. There is evidence that many first-generation students lack confidence in their ability to succeed in college. Supportive mentoring and proactive advising from trained staff members to orient students to the range of resources at the college or university, to help them navigate the pathway to a degree, and to provide career counseling, greatly enhance their likelihood of obtaining a postsecondary credential and suitable employment. However, our colleges and universities struggle to provide the level of staffing to support our students' needs.

This understaffing is especially critical in the area of mental health counseling, which all of our campus communities have identified as a shortage area of concern. Conditions such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD are increasingly prevalent among incoming students, or they may develop or worsen once students are in college. Years of budget cuts have eroded the ability of our campuses to hire professionals to address these needs. Students in need of mental health services endure long wait times to see the limited providers we have available. Strategic investments in student support services will pay ample dividends in increased student persistence and degree completions.

Finally, a substantial majority of incoming CSCU students must overcome the challenge of a lack of academic preparedness—a challenge that confronts traditional and nontraditional students alike. Approximately two-thirds of all first-year students across the CSCU system enroll in a developmental math or English course. This ratio has

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## Challenges Our Students Face (cont.)

remained steady over the past four years. The percentage of first-year students enrolled in developmental math or English ranges from 58% to 74% across our institutions. This is a significant barrier for our students to overcome and increases the time it takes to complete a degree program.

To address this issue Connecticut Public Act 12-40, an Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion, was passed in May 2012, directing public institutions to reconfigure how they deliver remedial/developmental education. With partial financial support from the state, the CSCU institutions implemented a comprehensive reorganization of our developmental education programs in fall 2014. This reorganization included innovative approaches to preparing transitional students who tested below minimal thresholds for math and English and the creation of new courses that allowed students to earn college credit for math and English with embedded support.

Our analysis of students who placed into a developmental education course following the implementation of PA 12-40 confirms that they are both more likely to place into and more likely to complete college-level English and math courses earlier in their college careers than students who enrolled prior to PA 12-40. These findings are all statistically significant and outside of the margins of error. The allocation of resources dedicated to implementing PA 12-40 has enabled the CSCU institutions to reduce the amount of time entering college students spend taking developmental courses. Continuing to invest in accelerating students' enrollment in college-level courses should remain a high priority in the state's strategic plan for higher education.

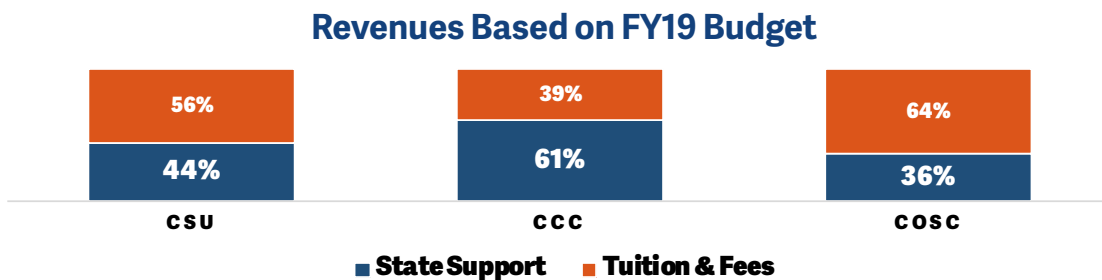
*"Last January, right before my 2nd semester of my sophomore year, my mother died unexpectedly from an accidental overdose...I was forced to become an independent adult at 19 years old; my only home being the room I resided in on campus...if it wasn't for the support of my financial aid office, if it wasn't for the guidance provided to me from the administration and staff at CCSU - I would not be here today."*

*Kassandra – Central Connecticut State University*

# Challenges Our System Faces

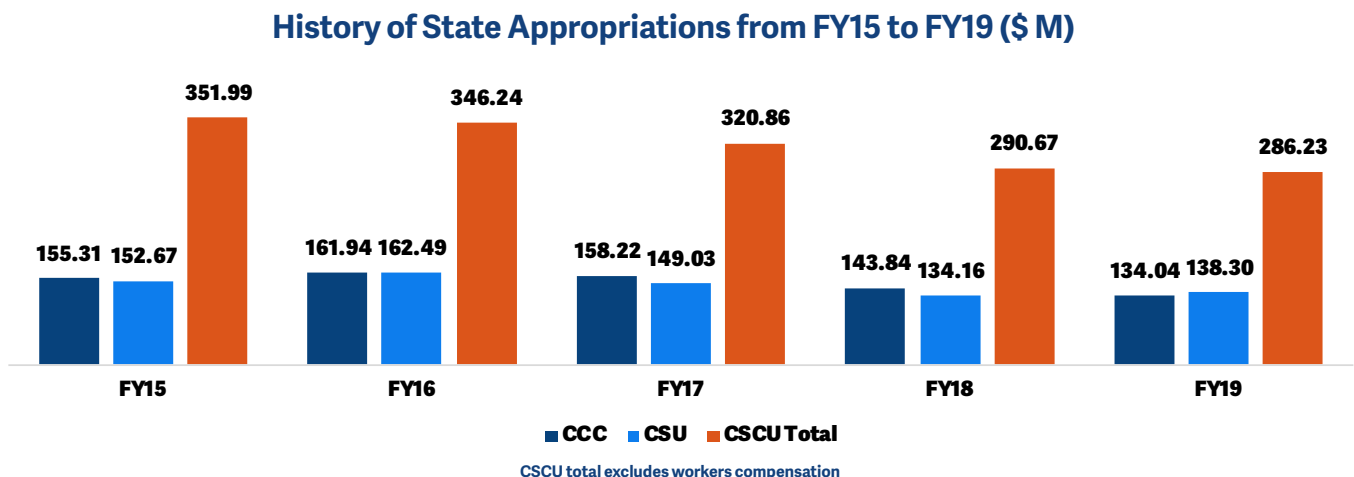
The single greatest challenge facing our institutions has been insufficient funding to make critical investments our students and institutions need to thrive. The lack of funding is driven by two distinct factors: eroding state support and declining enrollment. In order to continue to make education affordable to Connecticut residents, CSCU has kept tuition and fee rate increases to a minimum. This has been a difficult choice since stabilizing tuition reduces the financial burden on students but also reduces the income available to invest in supporting students.

State appropriations and tuition and fee revenue are the two primary sources of funding for our institutions. The degree to which CSCU institutions rely on state appropriations to fund their budgets differs greatly by constituent unit. Comparing state funding to tuition and fee revenues in the current year, the following table shows the vulnerability of the institutions when state funding is reduced:



As shown above, the community colleges rely on state appropriations for about 61% of their revenues and the universities about 44%. This means that while all CSCU institutions are susceptible to budget cuts, the community colleges are particularly vulnerable to large swings in state appropriations, and they have had to shoulder more of the funding reductions over the past several years.

Successive years of budget cuts, rescissions, lapses, and holdbacks have left our institutions with significantly reduced state support. Since 2015, CSCU's state appropriations have been reduced from \$351.99M to \$286.23M, a 19% reduction. The graph below shows the impact of funding reductions to our two largest block grants (CCC and CSU), as well as the reductions in overall appropriations for CSCU, not including workers compensation:





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## Challenges Our System Faces (cont.)

These budget cuts are compounded by and further fuel enrollment declines across CSCU. Since 2013, CSCU has experienced a 9% reduction in enrollment overall.

Enrollment trends are influenced substantially by several additional factors. First, the economy has a major impact on enrollments, particularly at the community college level. When the unemployment rate increases, enrollments in community colleges rise, as do graduation rates in low-tuition schools. The Great Recession, which was brought on by the financial crisis of 2007-08, began shortly after fall enrollment 2007. At that point, enrollments increased. In Academic Year 2010-2011, enrollment in both the CSUs and CCCs reached a high-water mark. Since then the employment picture has improved and enrollment began its decline. When people can find work, they tend to opt for employment instead of attending college, even though it may not be the type of work that produces high or even median national earnings.

The second factor influencing enrollment is the availability of recent high school graduates. The absolute number of high school graduates in Connecticut peaked in the spring of 2010. While CSCU continues to draw about the same percentage of graduating high school seniors each year, the absolute number of high school graduates is decreasing and is projected to do so for several years going forward.

Third, reductions in the state's higher education subsidy also adversely affect enrollment by driving institutions to raise tuition. Once again, potential students lose sight of the benefits of postsecondary education and see it as an expense rather than an investment.

These negative revenue drivers have placed us in an unsustainable financial position. While conventional financial management might call for cutting costs when expenses outpace revenue, most of the expenses at CSCU are externally driven. In fact, only 15% of the overall CSCU budget is truly discretionary. Employee salaries and wages account for 49% of our budget while fringe benefits account for 28%. Both of these factors are negotiated by the state through the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), not CSCU. With the no-layoff provision negotiated in SEBAC in exchange for long-term savings from labor, staff reduction will only come from attrition. Financial aid and tuition waivers (both driven by state law or market competition) account for another 5%, and debt servicing and related costs account for 3%. Such a high proportion of externally driven costs severely restricts the ability of the BOR and management to assure a sustainable system for the future.

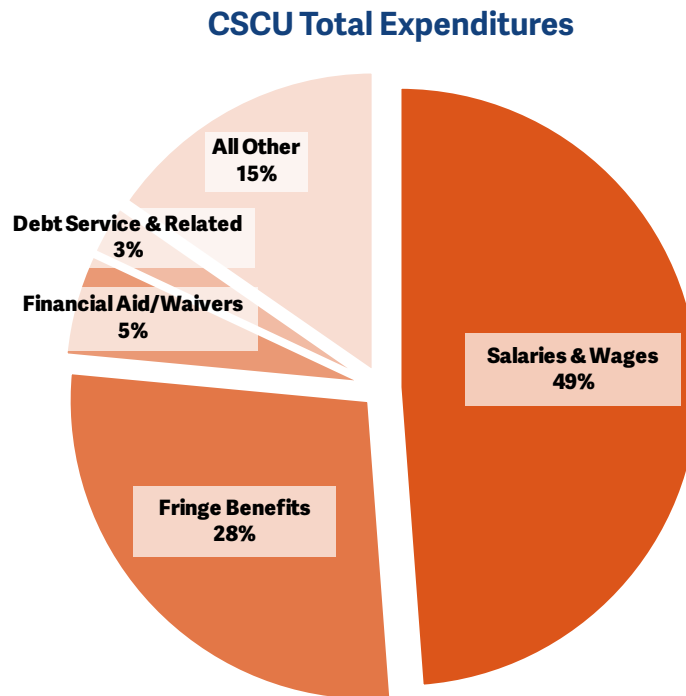
Within the "All Other" category, the largest drivers include utilities, food services, IT expenses, security, and insurance. We competitively bid all contracts and have engaged in forward-thinking arrangements to manage utility costs and service-related needs.

Further reductions in 15% of our costs will not be sufficient to offset revenue losses. The BOR and management have nevertheless undertaken strategic administrative consolidations to reduce expenses that remain within the system's control, as will be described below. Although these expenses are relatively limited in scope, the highly

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## Challenges Our System Faces (cont.)

publicized efforts to reduce them through the Students First initiative reflect CSCU's earnest commitment to accountability and progress.



Colleges and universities, like all longstanding institutions, also have reserve funds to help weather tough years. These rainy day funds are required by accreditors when evaluating the liquidity of a college or university. If these funds are deemed insufficient to support the institution, the entity is at risk of not being accredited, which could result in losing the authorization to award federal financial aid.

To help blunt the impact of our own budget deficits, our colleges and universities have dipped into their rainy day funds over the last few years. In addition, the state swept reserves to mitigate its own deficit twice over the past few years. This negative trend rarely goes unnoticed in our accreditation reviews and cannot be sustained in the future.

Accreditors recommend that institutions of higher education maintain a rainy day fund to cover approximately six-to-nine months of operating expenses. However, based on estimated expenditures for FY19, the CSUs, CCCs, and COSC, respectively, would have only enough unrestricted, undesignated reserves on hand at the end of FY19 to cover 0.67, 0.63, and 0.15 months of operating expenses.

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## Challenges Our System Faces (cont.)

For the past several years, faced with declining enrollment and support from the state, the BOR has been in the unenviable position of choosing between increasing tuition and fees, or cutting student services and supports. Because affordability and access are crucial to the mission of our institutions, the BOR has reluctantly opted to cut services and defer investments to avoid passing on ever-larger tuition increases.

These cumulative reductions have left some of our libraries and computer labs closed on nights and weekends, reduced security, diminished physical and mental health services, reduced tutoring, and eliminated opportunities to support sports and clubs, among other eliminations and reductions of core student services. We have had a hiring freeze in place for the last three years, and while this has saved millions of dollars across the system, it is not a viable long-term plan. Every cut diminishes the quality of our contribution to student success.

The cuts to student services have been significant enough that our accreditors have taken note. At a recent informational hearing of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, our accreditors noted that they are concerned about whether 10 of the 12 community colleges have sufficient resources to ensure educational quality for our students.

Further still, we have had to limit investment in the expensive and high-demand programs that prepare students for many 21st century jobs. Employers inform us that they are unable to find qualified employees to fill openings in fields such as advanced manufacturing, nursing, and cybersecurity, but our institutions lack the resources to admit more students to those programs. For example, tuition currently only covers a portion of the costs to graduate a student in advanced manufacturing and in the health care fields. The remainder of that cost is borne by the institution, not the student. To produce enough college-educated graduates to fill the jobs of the future, programs such as these will need sufficient resources to grow.

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# Recent Initiatives

Despite the challenges of the recent years, CSCU has taken decisive steps to ensure that the promise of educational opportunity is there for future generations of Connecticut residents. Out of necessity, our institutions have had to find new ways of educating and serving students with ever diminishing resources. This has required fundamentally rethinking the way we deliver instruction and services, manage our resources, and govern our institutions.

We understand that we are in no position to ask the state for more support unless we can demonstrate that we have pursued every option for achieving efficiencies and savings. Below is a sampling of our initiatives to reshape the way we operate and deliver more with less.

## Students First

Similar to the state itself, our institutions are being crippled by a structural deficit. For CSCU, the combination of years of declining appropriations, decreased tuition and fee revenue, and increased costs has created the structural deficit we find ourselves in today. Cutting costs has helped the system address immediate budget shortfalls but has diminished our reserves and reduced the services and supports that our students need to succeed. Accruing attrition savings and making marginal cuts from year to year will not solve the problem. Without real structural change, the system is unsustainable in both the short and long term. To be able to make critical investments in instruction, services, and supports, we must change the way we do business.

In April 2017, at the request of the BOR, the CSCU System President outlined the bold Students First initiative, which proposed two strategies to address these structural concerns. The charge from the BOR was to focus on fostering student success and the long-term sustainability of the system. The first called for consolidating the 12 community colleges into one singly accredited institution. Rather than closing campuses and limiting access, the first strategy focused on finding administrative savings. The second proposed the system-wide consolidation of administrative back-office functions. Work groups of faculty, staff, and administrators identified ways to implement changes in the key areas of facilities, information technology, institutional research, human resources and financial aid for all 17 institutions. Starting in spring 2019, administrative functions will be integrated into centralized, shared services to capture cost savings in areas that do not directly impact teaching and learning.

In addition, a workgroup was convened to outline a plan for the consolidated community college. These plans were shared with stakeholders through a series of forums and meetings, and, in March 2018, the BOR sought approval from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) at the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to consolidate the 12 individually accredited Connecticut community colleges. The plan calls for a singly accredited College with 12 campuses, a consolidated organizational structure, and integrated administrative functions. No reorganization of this magnitude had ever before been proposed for higher education in New England. NEASC did not approve our original substantive change proposal due to concerns that

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## Recent Initiatives (cont.)

it sought to change too much too quickly. Instead, they are now working with us to implement a more protracted transformation of the community college structure. In June 2018, the BOR approved a revised plan to regionalize our community college system and to align curriculum over a longer time period before we again seek a single accreditation in 2023.

Next year, we will begin to regionalize our community college system and prepare for a singly accredited community college by creating a new leadership structure. Faculty are working collaboratively across all of our colleges to align college curricula statewide to support high-quality educational programs, seamless transfer, and the adoption of a statewide general education curriculum. We will continue to reduce management costs, protect and improve student services, contain tuition, and preserve locations as we move towards the original one community college model with 12 campus locations.

*"I was deployed in 2009 to Iraq. I went from stay-at-home Mom to deployed. You have to have some type of motivation or internal push to do an online course. You hold your own-self accountable. Being a mom and being a soldier made me the ideal student for online. Because I know how to multi-task. Charter Oak has helped me with my independence."*

*Diana – Charter Oak State College*

## Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP)

In early 2012, shortly after creation of the CSCU System, the BOR approved the Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP), which was designed to solve one of the most intractable problems facing students in our system: transfer among institutions. This new policy sought to coordinate the creation of transfer associate's degrees (in specific disciplines) common to all CCCs. All credits in the new associate degrees apply to a degree in the same discipline at a CSU or COSC, which enables transferring students to earn a bachelor's degree by taking only 60 more credits, without having to waste time and money fulfilling additional requirements.

To date, over 500 faculty, staff, and administrators from every CSCU college and university have collaborated across disciplinary and campus divisions to design 27 discipline-specific transfer degrees marketed as Transfer Tickets. These degrees became available to community college students in 2016, and the first cohort transferred to the CSUs and COSC in 2018. As of the fall 2018 census, 5,253 students are enrolled in a Transfer Ticket program.

Both TAP and its Transfer Tickets have become a hallmark program that gives students a means for seamless, increasingly invisible transfer from the CCCs to the CSUs and COSC. It also has set a precedent for developing system-wide standards and provided a model for faculty and staff collaboration, as well as policy development across multiple campuses.

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## Recent Initiatives (cont.)

### Guided Pathways

To help our students persist and complete, the CSCU Student Success Center launched the Guided Pathways initiative. At scale, the Guided Pathways work will yield a redesigned experience for all community college students statewide. All students will develop their own academic and career plan in a new first-year experience course, students will be monitored to ensure that they remain on plan, and supports will be delivered to students who are off-plan or experiencing other challenges. The Guided Pathways approach to student support and the overall educational experience has led to dramatic increases in student retention and completion in states across the U.S.

*“Since my enrollment, I am more financially stable, I have been awarded a job with Pratt and Whitney before I could even finish my second semester of education, and best of all, I have a CAREER. Asnuntuck Community College has changed my life forever and I am so grateful.”*

*Alexandria – Asnuntuck Community College*

Guided Pathways will serve as the cornerstone of our plan to improve student enrollment, retention, and completion at the community colleges. Working with the CSCU Student Success Center, faculty and staff from across our institutions have been collaborating since last summer to design new and aligned practices for the new, singly accredited College. The recommendations of these groups will be used to help improve student experiences with enrollment in the colleges for fall 2019, including a single application to the community colleges; consistent websites at both the system and the colleges to support enrollment, transfer, and transparency; development of meta-majors (areas of study) that organize degrees into categories that support student decision-making; and greater use of technology to enroll and support students through advising.

### Addressing Student Barriers through Partnerships

Transportation has been a perennial barrier to access for our students. Working with the state Department of Transportation (DOT), we developed the UPass program, which gives CSCU students unlimited access to Connecticut public transportation for one year for \$40. This fall semester, 68,000 passes have been made available to our students at all the participating institutions. Ongoing funding to DOT for this program is critical to our students’ access to college.

Every year, students complain about the high and ever-increasing cost of textbooks. This year, CSCU negotiated a new contract for our bookstores to reduce the costs for students, and promoted the use of Open Educational

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## Recent Initiatives (cont.)

Resources (OER). Today, because of our partnerships, our students have saved more than \$4 million dollars on the cost of textbooks, in one year alone. Over four years, faculty have saved over 14,000 students more than \$1.5M by using OER.

To improve enrollment and retention across colleges and universities, Southern CSU, Gateway CC, and Housatonic CC launched the A to B program to encourage students not yet ready for the university to start their education with the college and move seamlessly after they finish their associate's degree. The institutions are partnering to provide students with the advising they need to pursue their educational paths, and they are exploring ways to offer university courses on the college campuses. The other universities are now working with colleges in their regions to begin these partnerships.

Both nationally and locally, there is growing concern for the mental health needs of students. Finding ways to link students quickly to available providers is critical. Campuses have initiated Early Alert programs to support students who are showing signs of mental distress. As part of our efforts to provide students with wraparound services, we are partnering with the Wheeler Clinic to offer training on mental health. A new three-year, \$375,000 federal grant will support Mental Health First Aid trainings for Connecticut public safety professionals. Wheeler Clinic, working with a host of organizations including the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council and the CSCU system, will offer the eight-hour trainings to more than 1,700 police and fire first responders and college campus security and student conduct professionals. The grant is provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

## Supporting Veterans

Thousands of veterans have graduated from our colleges and universities and have gone on to successful careers in our state. We are particularly proud of the activities and supports provided to veterans through our Veteran's Oasis and Drop-In Centers. In order to ease the transition to our schools, we also partner with the Department of Labor to guide veterans through the CSCU enrollment process with dedicated customer service representatives. Almost all of our schools have an active veterans' center and hopefully these centers will continue to evolve.

## Advanced Manufacturing

Connecticut's manufacturing industry will need thousands of new, skilled workers to meet its current contracts and future growth objectives. It is estimated that 25,000 workers will be needed for the state's 4,100 manufacturers, which offers compelling evidence for the resurgence of manufacturing in Connecticut.

During the past eight years, CSCU has been educating highly skilled workers and, more recently, has been significantly expanding its efforts to stay ahead of the expected growth curve. Our efforts were greatly enhanced



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## Recent Initiatives (cont.)

in 2015 by a US Department of Labor grant designed to help states support manufacturing. The \$15M allocated to Connecticut enabled CSCU to expand the number of Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers from four to seven, putting affordable education and training within the reach of many more students. Recently, we added an eighth Tech Center in the Greater Hartford area. The US DOL grant was used to add classrooms and labs, employ more instructors, and fund a marketing campaign to create awareness and recruit new students.

The curriculum used to train these students is, in large part, developed with our manufacturing partners, including major manufacturers like Pratt and Whitney and Electric Boat, and from input we receive from their supply chain manufacturers and the trade associations as well. Their input ensures that CSCU's courses and programs continue to meet industry's evolving needs and support exciting new technology in aerospace, defense, biomedical, and other high tech sectors.

Scaling our advanced manufacturing programs to meet industry's future needs is CSCU's next great challenge. Doubling our current output of advanced manufacturing students across the system would require an \$8.5M investment. Attracting and recruiting students will require raising much greater awareness of the career and income opportunities advanced manufacturing offers. We are nearing completion of a strategic plan to create a roadmap for meeting this challenge. We will soon launch an aggressive marketing campaign. A partnership agreement between CSCU and the state's technical high school system will be signed shortly that will extend our reach beyond our eight Centers to the state's 12 technical high schools. Finally, an expansion of CSCU's "college connection" program is also underway to expose comprehensive high school students to careers in advanced manufacturing; credits earned by those students will reduce the number of courses required for a manufacturing certificate.

## Infrastructure

As a system, we continue to recognize the financial need for energy savings and the environmental imperative to pursue sustainable solutions. With the state, we unveiled the first two of their new solar energy systems, the result of a public-private partnership between GE Solar and CT Green Bank. Manchester CC (MCC) is the first and largest solar energy site in the CSCU system; others include Asnuntuck CC, Central CSU, Housatonic CC, Middlesex CC, Quinebaug Valley CC, Southern CSU, Tunxis CC, and Western CSU. The solar energy system will provide about 45% of MCC's total electricity use, saving an average of over \$220,000/year. The solar energy initiative was funded entirely with private capital and will cover 8.5% of all CSCU annual electricity usage with an estimated \$15M in savings.

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# Policy and Funding Solutions

CSCU's recent initiatives have gone a long way to improve the educational experiences of our students. However, there is much more that we can accomplish with support from the Governor and the General Assembly. With increased funding and innovative policy changes, the state's leaders can help us continue the momentum achieved in recent years. In doing so, policymakers will not only help overcome the challenges facing our students and our institutions, but also harness CSCU to be an engine of change to improve Connecticut's economy and open up opportunity for its residents.

We present below a number of investment concepts targeting student success and high-demand academic programs, as well as proposed policy changes that can help realize the full potential of CSCU and our students. Many of these crucial investments are in areas that have suffered from cutbacks in recent budgets and that we believe have the greatest potential for improving outcomes.

While some of the concepts below include concrete cost projections, they are all meant to facilitate a dialogue with policymakers about what is possible for the future. None of these proposals can be accomplished within our already stretched appropriations. If policymakers wish us to undertake these initiatives, they will require increased support beyond what the state is currently providing.

## Free or Reduced Tuition Models

All across the country, particularly in our neighboring states of New York and Rhode Island, there are models for attending college free or with reduced tuition and fees. In fact, the CT General Assembly has put forth legislative proposals along similar lines. These models have ranged from completely free public higher education for certain income bands, to free community college and a multitude of Promise programs. The viability of these programs hinges on the amount of funding available and the communities that policymakers plan to serve. While free tuition is the most advantageous model for students, it is the costliest model for the state. To guarantee free education, the state would need to subsidize in-state students fully during a time when budgetary concerns may prohibit that level of funding.

Most of the states with "free higher education" programs have a number of restrictions and rules for a student to qualify. In all of these models, Pell awards are the first dollar in, with the state subsidizing the differential. At our community colleges, 31% of students are currently full-Pell recipients and therefore have no out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and fees. Across all of our institutions, there is a sizeable population of students who already receive a no-cost education through a combination of Pell awards and state and institutional aid. However, estimating the true cost of a statewide free tuition model would require further clarification concerning eligibility and restrictions.

## Policy and Funding Solutions (cont.)

As a starting point in any tuition and fee discussion, particularly a free college discussion, it is important to understand what it would cost CSCU and the state just to hold tuition flat from year to year. A CSCU staff report from October 2018 used assumptions based on past experience to create an analysis of the cost to freeze tuition and fees for the next biennium. As seen in the chart below, the increased investment (Delta) from FY19 that would be required to hold tuition and fees flat is \$15.7M in FY20 and \$31.9M in FY21.

**Data from Baseline Operating Budget**

		CSU	CCC	COSC	CSCU Total
FY19 Tuition		170.7	125.3	9.5	305.4
FY19 Fees		181.4	57.3	0.7	239.3
FY19 Institutional Aid		(41.4)	(17.8)	(0.0)	(59.2)
	<b>Total FY19</b>	<b>310.7</b>	<b>164.7</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>485.6</b>
FY20 Tuition		177.5	127.8	9.9	315.1
FY20 Fees		188.2	58.4	0.7	247.3
FY20 Institutional Aid		(43.0)	(18.2)	(0.0)	(61.2)
	<b>Total FY20</b>	<b>322.7</b>	<b>168.0</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>501.2</b>
	<b>Delta from FY19</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>15.7</b>
FY21 Tuition		184.6	130.3	10.3	325.2
FY21 Fees		195.3	59.6	0.7	255.6
FY21 Institutional Aid		(44.8)	(18.5)	(0.0)	(63.3)
	<b>Total FY21</b>	<b>335.2</b>	<b>171.4</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>517.5</b>
	<b>Delta from FY19</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>31.9</b>

The BOR is considering a number of different tuition and fee options, all of which are intended to control the cost of education and incentivize degree completion in the most accelerated time appropriate. Making the cost of education transparent is also critical, and the BOR is exploring the option of collapsing tuition and fees into a single amount. Advertising low tuition but charging high fees, as is done in some neighboring states, masks the real cost to students and their families. Adopting any of these tuition plans would require significant state investment but would allow for a quicker return on that investment as more students complete their degrees, join the workforce in their chosen fields, and contribute to the state's economy through productivity and tax payments.

One such concept to consider would be a tuition/fee flat rate guarantee for full-time students for the duration of their enrollment. This can be done by charging full-time students the same tuition and fees for up to three years of attendance at the colleges and up to five years at the universities. This would make the cost of education predictable for anyone seeking a degree within a reasonable period of time and encourage students to finish faster in order to take advantage of the rates. This would also require careful consideration of rates charged to incoming freshman to ensure that they are not covering the flat rates for the preceding students.

Another rate guarantee could be considered for TAP students who have completed a program at a community college and are transferring to one of our four-year institutions to pursue a bachelor's degree. TAP students could pay flat or reduced rates for the remaining two years.

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## Policy and Funding Solutions (cont.)

In addition, the BOR is considering a number of innovative tuition and fee reductions or rebates to help incentivize student completion. One of these calls for refunding a percentage of the students' educational costs upon graduation. This option is attractive because it aligns the tuition and fee policy with the college completion objectives of the system and the state.

*"Having the opportunity to participate in research and travel to all these great places has opened my eyes to potential careers, it's given me more confidence, and a lifestyle of inquiry"*

*Jacob – Eastern Connecticut State University*

The promise of a last semester free could also incentivize students to complete. This promise would involve forgiving a quarter of the cost of education for a full-time college student and an eighth of the cost for a university student, and could provide incentives for students to complete similar to a tuition rebate or free college, but at a much lower cost to the state and the institutions.

It has also been suggested that CSCU work with the state legislature and new administration to establish a new student loan forgiveness or tax credit program that benefits those who pursue a certificate or degree in Connecticut at either a public or private institution and then either work in the nonprofit or public sector or find employment in high-demand fields in the state such as manufacturing, information technology, or allied health.

Several states throughout the country—most notably Tennessee, Indiana, and Oklahoma—have established "Promise" programs that guarantee a fully paid college education for students who graduate with a specified GPA from a public high school in the state. Connecticut currently has a few city-based Promise programs, including New Haven and Hartford, but no statewide effort or state funding. States that support Promise set aside funds to ensure they are available when the students complete high school and enter college.

All of these tuition and fee initiatives have merit but have very different costs and implications for students. They will require careful discussion with the Governor and the General Assembly, and consideration by the BOR to fully implement.

## Student Support Investments

While our institutions have always had limited resources to expand supports that foster student success, years of budget cuts have eroded our ability to address student needs adequately. Positions vacated through attrition or retirement have either gone unfilled or been replaced with part-time employees, leaving our academic and student services areas severely understaffed.

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## Policy and Funding Solutions (cont.)

Of all the student support services provided by colleges and universities, advising has the most direct impact on student completion. Professional advisors and faculty share responsibility for advising students, with each supplying unique and critical expertise to help students complete a course of study successfully. Professional advisors provide guidance throughout students' entire academic career, helping them choose or change a major, making sure they meet deadlines, helping them overcome academic deficiencies, and ensuring they have fulfilled all requirements. Faculty help students explore and understand a discipline and the career paths to which it leads; they guide students in selecting major courses and facilitate experiences that advance their career preparation.

Over the years, as resources have grown tighter, our institutions have replaced departing full-time faculty with adjunct faculty as a less expensive alternative. At the same time, it has been challenging to fill some competitive faculty positions; particularly in areas like advanced manufacturing and healthcare, where faculty can earn much more in the private sector. While adjuncts are dedicated and effective classroom teachers, they do not have responsibility for advising students. The colleges currently have 754 FTE full-time faculty serving approximately 50,000 students—a 64:1 ratio. In contrast, the four universities employ 1,276 FTE full-time faculty, or a 26:1 ratio of students to faculty. Investments to increase the number of full-time faculty at the colleges will dramatically increase the support that students receive both in and outside the classroom. The BOR's recent submission to OPM on budget expansion options requested approximately \$25M to hire over 200 full-time faculty at the colleges over the biennium.

As the number of full-time faculty at our colleges has decreased, the responsibility for advising students has increasingly fallen to a small number of advisors who carry too large a caseload to give individual students the attention they need. Based on data from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the ideal college ratio for advisees to advisor is approximately 250:1. NACADA has reported that the median ratio of advisees to advisor at two-year colleges in the United States is 441:1<sup>6</sup>. However, the advisees to advisor ratio for our community colleges is more than twice the national median: 900:1. The advisees to advisor ratio at the state universities ranges from 501:1 to 767:1. The CSCU recent submission to OPM on budget expansion options requested approximately \$13M for college advisors and \$8M for advisors at the universities.

While a number of improvements in our services on campus can be addressed through technology or innovation, there is no substitute for the personal support and service that qualified and dedicated faculty and staff provide to students. A workplace-based study by Gallup found that college graduates who were "emotionally supported" during college by a professor or mentor were twice as likely to be engaged in their work and three times as likely to be "thriving in their well-being" as students who did not experience such support<sup>7</sup>. Hiring faculty and staff who will connect with our students and guide them along an academic and career pathway can provide the greatest return on investment not only in college completion, but also in subsequent job satisfaction.

<sup>6</sup> National Academic Advising Association. 2011 NACADA National Survey of Academic Advising. <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/2011-NACADA-National-Survey.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Brandon Busteed. Aiming Higher Education at Great Jobs and Great Lives. Gallup. 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/HobsonsInc/aiming-higher-education-at-great-jobs-great-lives>

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## Policy and Funding Solutions (cont.)

Providing adequate and stable funding for CSCU can help ensure that we have the resources needed to invest in these and other important student support services. These supports are all the more needed considering the challenges that most of our students face. Whether they are working while attending school, first-generation students, low-income, parents, or older nontraditional students, most of them will need advising or supports at some point in their education.

### Expansion of Roberta Willis Scholarship and Work Study Programs

Financial aid is essential for most CSCU students. The state's investment in the Roberta Willis merit- and need-based scholarship program has demonstrably improved the lives of our students. However, more aid is needed to address the increasing cost of education. In addition, we believe that these scholarships should be expanded to students who are pursuing certificates at our colleges. Currently students have to pay out of pocket for non-credit programs even when they are filling high-need areas in our state's economy. The state can help support job seekers in their efforts to secure marketable training through an expansion of this program. In addition, studies have shown that students benefit from the opportunity to work on campus while pursuing their education. With additional state resources, our campuses can expand work-study opportunities beyond those funded through the federal government.

### Partnerships with Business

CSCU has been dedicated to addressing the needs of business and industry for a skilled workforce. We have been the recipients of federal grants focused on educating students in the areas of manufacturing, digital media, and health and life sciences in collaboration with major companies in our state. These federal grants, which have all expired, invested nearly \$30M in our colleges and universities.

These grants allowed us to expand the curriculum and capacity of our academic programs at the community colleges, support professional development for faculty and staff, market high-demand jobs to students, and purchase cutting-edge equipment and software to ensure that students' learning was aligned with the most current industry requirements. These industries and many others in Connecticut are in need of educated graduates who are ready to join the workforce. In particular, the universities have several degree programs and Centers of Excellence that are vital to the state's efforts in critical fields such as environmental sustainability, nanotechnology, criminal justice, cybersecurity, and entrepreneurship.

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## Policy and Funding Solutions (cont.)

While we will continue to pursue federal grant opportunities, the state can help us to meet this employer demand by making similar investments in key academic programs. Graduates of these programs have been in high demand; with these jobs in hand, they are living and working in Connecticut and contributing to our overall state growth and competitiveness. In addition, the state could help to accelerate these educational and workforce efforts by partnering with the colleges and universities and business to promote internships for all Connecticut college students. Early exposure to employment opportunities while in higher education programs can help students and businesses to see their future in Connecticut. With support from the new administration and legislature, our colleges and universities can also address the incumbent worker training needs of the state's small- and medium-sized employers. Leveraging state, private industry, and public higher education resources to support these experiences can impact our state's workforce and tax base.

### Partnerships with K-12

Expanding pathways from high school to higher education is essential for Connecticut to reach its goals of increasing college completion rates, closing the attainment gap, and increasing high school student engagement. Connecticut, like other states across the country, utilizes dual enrollment to cultivate seamless P-20 pathways and increase credential completion. Dual enrollment programs provide high school students the opportunity to enroll in college-level courses, simultaneously earning them both high school and college credit, often at greatly reduced costs. These programs help students develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be postsecondary education- and workforce-ready.

A postsecondary credential is increasingly becoming the minimum educational requirement for a job that earns a living wage in Connecticut. To improve access to higher education for low-income students, the costs of participating in dual enrollment must be reduced or eliminated. Given the impressive work that the state has done to promote high school graduation, investment in dual enrollment through grants to school districts could build on that success and encourage students to earn college credit while still enrolled in their districts.

In addition, with the state's emphasis on pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, the model of concurrent enrollment supports students who simultaneously are in high school and college programs. Currently, these programs are supported with restricted federal dollars that limit the number and type of eligible students. Neither the school districts nor the colleges have funding to support expansion of these programs. By dedicating resources to support these types of high school and college partnerships, the state can help districts provide this essential educational opportunity. The investment would also help to address the state's ongoing efforts to promote desegregation and equity by making sure that urban youth make the transition to college and to employment as seamlessly as possible.

Research indicates that dual enrollment students are more likely to enroll and persist in college than their peers and are less likely to need remedial education once in college. This return on investment is something CSCU believes the next administration should explore.



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# Capital Needs

In FY2009, legislation authorized the CSU 2020 Program. This program funded a multi-year CSU capital program of new facilities, capital improvements, information technology, new and replacement equipment, and property acquisitions. Additionally, the CSU 2020 Program included an annual distribution of funds to the community colleges in FY2015 and funding for an addition to a community college facility in FY2016. Funding allocations from this program occurred by way of annual requests and approvals from the CSU to the Governor, as opposed to individual Bond Commission project and program requests. Funding from the CSU 2020 program expires in FY2019, with the exception of specific project funding that was deferred from FY2018 and FY2019 to FY2020.

Continuing to receive annual lump sum funding, as opposed to periodic Bond Commission allocations, enables high-level planning and implementation that allows work to be completed more efficiently with the same amount of funding. CSCU is requesting legislative approval to extend the CSU 2020 Program through FY2029 with appropriate funding allowances.

**CSCU has more than  
13.5M square feet of  
facilities**

CSCU systematically substantiates its short- and long-term capital needs through annual facility evaluation updates and periodic preparation of comprehensive Facility Master Plans for each institution. These evaluations also include benchmarking against other higher education institutions. CSCU capital requests are predominately based on those evaluations. Facility Master Plans derive student headcount from baseline data for each program of study. Although the Master Plans project almost no student growth over the next ten years, some expansion will be required to expand undersized campus facilities, update facilities for new programs and fields of study, and modify existing facilities to comply with current occupancy laws.

In the coming weeks, CSCU will present a proposal to the new administration for a phased, prioritized list of projects and related estimated capital costs through FY2029. These requests will include major and minor capital improvements, information technology, new and replacement equipment, and property acquisitions. The total funding request will be consistent with prior funding years adjusted for inflation.

The CSCU facilities infrastructure consists of more than 13.5M square feet of space. The spaces comprise academic, administrative, student life, and other educational support functions. CSCU Facilities Department staff administer renovations to existing spaces and construction of new spaces. This department is composed of seasoned architects, engineers, construction managers, and support staff. Important Facilities Department responsibilities include establishing campus needs, identifying initial program requirements, establishing project budgets, coordinating funding requests, funding distributions, and administrative oversight.

Currently, state law allows CSCU to self-administer construction projects only when the project is valued at less than \$2M. The Department of Construction Services (DCS), a division of the Department of Administrative



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## Capital Needs (cont.)

Services, administers projects valued at \$2M or higher. DCS is required to retain all design and related professional consultants for both project types. Through the combination of legislative authorizations of state bond funds and university student-funded CHEFA bond funds, CSCU capital funding totals approximately \$200M annually.

Although DCS has made efforts to expedite its approval process, it has not appreciably improved the delivery of our construction services. These delays are costly for CSCU and the taxpayers. While our students and institutions wait for the facilities improvements they need, taxpayers lose 3% in annual construction inflationary costs for every year a project is delayed.

CSCU proposes to modify its capital program operations by assuming some of the functions currently performed by DCS, as has been recommended in prior DCS and CSCU assessments. Legislatively authorizing CSCU to administer all of its own projects, in addition to selecting its own consultants, will streamline capital operations, decrease staffing needs, and speed up project delivery, which will decrease the costs associated with inflation for each project. CSCU seeks the same authorization to administer its own construction projects as the University of Connecticut. We believe this provides a better value to the taxpayer and tighter control over budget and schedule, while continuing to ensure competitive bidding from contractors and other providers.

Restructuring the CSCU capital program and implementing the measures outlined above will significantly reduce contracting and procurement time periods, provide greater efficiency with funding approvals, and offer an overall reduction of staffing levels for the state by eliminating a duplication of efforts. The estimated combined savings through this change is approximately \$4.38M, annually.

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# Moving Connecticut Forward

The new administration and legislature will have to decide the role that public higher education will play in their vision for the future of Connecticut. They can decide either to prolong the history of incremental cuts to the funding of CSCU or to promote policies and commit resources to invigorate the state's largest provider of higher education. If the state opts to keep reducing support, the BOR will continue to minimize tuition increases through cuts in services and supports until more drastic reductions become necessary. Alternatively, they can choose to endorse policies and invest resources that will enable CSCU to address the state's economic challenges and deliver the promise of opportunity to our residents.

The next administration will face many challenges as it tries to increase the state's competitiveness, meet the workforce needs of business and industry, and foster an educated and engaged citizenry. CSCU is the most important tool in the proverbial toolkit to achieve those goals with over 10,000 employees and 140,000 students ready to help Connecticut grow and prosper.

Access and affordability remain paramount to our mission and student success. We cannot continue to ask our students and their families to absorb the cost of our budget deficits. To reverse enrollment declines at nearly every institution in our system, we are implementing a more coordinated approach to marketing and enrollment management. We are exploring strategies, such as flexible scheduling, to attract more adult learners. We are making progress on better outreach to guidance counselors and other K12 groups across the state. And we take pride in our efforts to make our campuses a home for everyone.

From certificate to doctoral program, urban to rural campuses, full-time traditional students to lifelong-learner, CSCU has a place for anyone in Connecticut looking to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their communities. Every day, our institutions collaborate with our local communities and businesses to educate not just the next generation of Connecticut's workforce, but also the leaders, entrepreneurs, and informed citizens we need to have a dynamic and diverse state. We have recently undertaken sweeping reforms to improve student success and ensure the sustainability of our system. With the support of the next administration and legislature, we can achieve our bold vision for public higher education in Connecticut. As partners, we can strengthen our communities and the economy. Together we can build a stronger future for us all.