

Substantive Change Request for Community College Consolidation

PRESENTED TO THE NEW ENGLAND COMMISSION OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

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By:
The Board of Regents for Higher Education
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Connecticut State Community College

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Presented to the New England Commission of Higher Education

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Introduction

In 2017 the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), the governing body for Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), announced its decision to merge the 12 community colleges under its purview into a single institution.

“Students First” was developed to address the fiscal challenges faced by the 12 colleges and to improve student success. Currently, the colleges are experiencing on-going enrollment declines and budget cuts, that have been layered on top of long-standing structural problems. As a result, the students in Connecticut (CT) suffer. CT has the lowest community college 3-year completion rate in New England at 16%. The data is more jarring when considering completion rates—22% for white students and 11% for Black and Hispanic students. Perhaps the most tragic figure is that less than half of the new Fall 2019 community college students returned for a second year. For these students, dreams of higher education, or a career with a living wage to support their family have been put on hold. Faculty, staff, and administrators care deeply about improving these metrics but have not been able to realize meaningful change despite the best intentions, and it is only made more difficult by a fragmented structure.

The merger seeks to leverage economies of scale to address longstanding budget deficits while remaining firmly committed to the access that is the foundation of the community college mission. In short, the merger addresses financial concerns without closing any locations while leveraging resources to increase vital student supports. The BOR’s commitment to keeping all locations open lies at the heart of the strategic motivation behind the merger. In a small state, when students can move easily and freely between the campuses and when all courses count toward a degree or credential, student outcomes will improve. A single institution provides a way to remove barriers for students and implement student success reforms at scale. The merger also provides the resources to address years of individual colleges’ under-investment in infrastructure and faculty and employee development.

We have provided regular updates to the Commission through our 2019, 2020, and 2021 progress reports which have captured the development of this new institution from concept to realization in Spring 2022.

CT State is proud to provide the Commission with our substantive change proposal that details the tremendous

progress that we have made to build CT State. As you will see herein, despite the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic fallout, progress toward the launch of CT State has reached a point where we can move into the final stages of this transformation. With the Commission’s approval of this proposal, CT State will then begin admitting students into the new institution in the Fall 2023 semester.

This substantive change proposal has been developed with assistance from many members of the CT State and college community, including all 12 CT community college CEOs/ Presidents, CSCU system office staff, NECHE Commission staff, campus staff, and faculty. In addition, assistance has come from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) and the Development Institute, and finally our governing board, the members of the CT Board of Regents for Higher Education.

We have organized the document into NECHE’s nine standard areas, with the specific areas of emphasis requested by Commission embedded within the relevant standard. The appendices have been organized with Appendix A showing the enrollment projections that have been developed and Appendix items B-U detailing the financial schedules. All other appendix items follow the narrative of the proposal.

The references relating to “colleges” refers to the 12 existing NECHE-accredited institutions as they exist now and prior to the merger. When referring to CT State, we use the term “CT State” and “campuses” to refer to the future locations. This recognizes that the twelve existing colleges remain separately accredited until July 1, 2023, when CT State comes into formal existence.

In their presentations to the NECHE Annual meeting in December 2021, Nathan Grawe and Arthur Levine each highlighted New England’s demographic challenges and need for change in higher education. This merger, in all its complexity, will address that need for change and over time put us on a much more solid financial footing without the need to close any campuses. Doing so would disastrously disadvantage those we serve, our students.

STANDARD ONE: Mission and Purposes

Under the aegis of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), the merger of the 12 community colleges into Connecticut State Community College (CT State) was first proposed in April 2017 and endorsed by the BOR the following April and again in June 2018. In an environment of declining enrollment, financial instability, lagging student-success indicators, and widening equity gaps, the intention is to combine and strengthen resources through consolidation to support equitable student success across the state. From the outset, the BOR grounded the merger in six core principles:

1. Ensure students are at the center of all decisions.
2. Prioritize teaching, learning, and high-quality academic programming.
3. Preserve and enhance student-support services.
4. Safeguard educational access and affordability.
5. Be conscientious stewards of the students' and the state's investment in institutions.
6. Ensure campuses are positioned to build partnerships with the state's businesses and other enterprises to prepare a highly skilled and well-educated workforce.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

Creation, Adoption, and Affirmation of Mission and Vision Statements

The 12 individual community college mission statements currently focus on providing accessible and affordable quality education, improving student success, and responding to the needs of the community (see Appendix V). The urgent need to evaluate data and use it to improve equitable student success is of considerable importance to consolidation efforts and the CT State mission provides a system-wide direction for all campuses to move collectively to promote equity and student success, advance positive change, and benefit communities across the state.

Through a collaborative approach that included faculty, staff, and administrators on two large steering committees—the College Consolidation Implementation Committee (CCIC) and the Students First Academic and Student Affairs Consolidation Committee (SF ASA CC)—the CT State mission and vision reflect the overarching goals of providing excellent higher education and lifelong learning to all students, maintaining affordability and accessibility, and contributing to the economic growth of the state. The BOR

adopted both statements in 2017 and reaffirmed their commitment in 2019 and 2021 (see Appendix W). The CT State mission and vision statements below are clearly stated on the [consolidation website](#) and they will be prominently printed in future CT State publications.

Mission

CT State provides access to academically rigorous and innovative education and training focused on student success. The College supports excellence in teaching and learning, makes data-informed decisions, promotes equity, and advances positive change for the students, communities, and industries it serves.

Vision

CT State will be recognized for exceptional student success, educational leadership, and transformative collaboration with business and industry, government, educational, and key stakeholders while advancing diverse opportunities for CT's citizens and communities.

COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING EQUITY

In alignment with the mission's focus on promoting equity, some of the first actions of new CSCU President Terrence Cheng, who assumed office in July 2021, were to strengthen the charge of the systemwide Equity Council (see Appendix X); establish a new CT State Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); and appoint an interim CT State Vice President of DEI. The Equity Council created a personalized CT State equity statement (see Appendix Y), identified seven strategic pillars for equity (see Appendix Z), and developed a new framework in which CT State commits to bold and disruptive change through three main steps:

1

actively identifying, naming, and dismantling structural racism, systemic poverty, and other barriers caused by marginalization

2

establishing equitable and anti-racist policies and practices

3

empowering students, faculty, staff, and administrators to advance racial, social, and economic justice

Actions to Be Completed Prior to July 2023

Ensuring a College-Wide Focus on DEI

Significant momentum has been made towards advancing equity (see Appendix AA) and CT State will begin operationalizing DEI principles and practices in all levels of the institution to ensure a solid and enduring foundation for the future. CT State will establish specific goals and benchmarks to chart progress in improving key performance indicators (KPIs); incorporate the seven equity principles in all actions; and integrate equity, inclusion, and student success in planning and development at the local and state levels. This combined operationalization of the six BOR core principles of the merger and the seven strategic pillars for equity provide the cornerstone for CT State to comprehensively focus on continuous improvement and institutional accountability. This will advance equity and excellence in teaching and learning to serve all students and strengthen local communities. The core collective responsibility for the future is to continuously assess practices and policies and create transformational community change by eliminating inequities.

Conclusion

The BOR and CT State leadership team understand the importance of regularly reviewing the mission and vision and this has been incorporated into the strategic planning process (see Standard 2). The leadership team has also committed to reviewing these foundational and guiding statements at regular intervals in staff meetings to support common understanding and acceptance of the CT State mission and vision. In alignment with the mission, CT State is focused on advancing equity and improving student success. The CT State equity statement, the seven pillars for equity, and the equity framework guide will guide college action.

STANDARD TWO: Planning and Evaluation

CT State is in the process of establishing a comprehensive and extensive system for planning and evaluation to identify, integrate, implement, and continually assess the operations of the College. CT State is also working to incorporate appropriate planning and evaluation roles and responsibilities throughout all levels of the College. This integration is occurring in concert with the development of the CT State Shared Governance Proposal and ongoing collective bargaining agreement negotiations (see Standard 3).

Response to the Commission's Concerns

Planning and Evaluation (Special Attention Area # 1)

Content Analysis of Strategic Plans

In Fall 2020, the newly appointed CT State leadership team initiated a formal CT State strategic planning process by analyzing the current 12 colleges' strategic plans, identifying common themes, and creating guiding principles for CT State based on these existing plans. During this process, six common themes that aligned with the CT State mission and vision and the BOR core principles were identified:

- equity and college culture;
- student access, support, and success;
- enrollment management;
- innovation, effectiveness, and growth;
- community engagement; and
- stewardship, affordability, and sustainability.

Once these themes were established, feedback was elicited from many stakeholder groups including the CT State leadership team, 12 colleges' CEOs/Presidents, SF ASA CC, Academic Deans Council, Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), Center for Teaching Steering Committee, 12 colleges' Achieving the Dream (ATD) co-leads, and the CT State Teaching and Learning Council.

Executive Strategic Planning Council and Priority Areas

In Spring 2021, the CT State Executive Strategic Planning Council (ESPC) was formed composed of 50 individuals representing constituents (faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders) from 11 of the 12 colleges (see Ap-

pendix AB). The ESPC was charged with developing a CT State Strategic Plan and designing a process to effectively implement and assess the plan's goals and objectives (see Appendix AC) and gathering feedback from all constituencies. Initially, the 11 priority areas that were identified in Spring 2021 focused on: excellence, mobility, accessibility, orientation, support, user-friendliness, common core, transferability, workforce development, efficiency, and savings (see Appendix AD).

Ongoing Work Aligned with Strategic Planning Priorities

Aligned with the overarching strategic planning goals, CT State is increasing student retention and completion by hiring more Guided Pathways (GP) advisors; reducing barriers to student equity through work with the ATD organization, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and the CSCU Student Success Center; reforming developmental education from a prerequisite to a corequisite model; aligning curricula to make it easier for students to take classes at multiple campuses; and creating one college application and financial aid award processes that can be used statewide.

Current Strategic Planning Work

In January 2022, an ESPC sub-committee established three meta-priorities (effectiveness, equity, and community) from the initial priority list (see Appendix AE). The sub-committee is moving each of the 11 priorities into one of the three meta-priorities and to date the work is more than half complete. In Spring 2022, the sub-committee will align the remaining priorities and incorporate the plans, goals, and benchmarks of major college-wide initiatives in the CT State strategic plan. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed for each meta-priority

and sub-committees of the ESPC will regularly assess CT State’s achievement in each area. A second ESPC sub-committee started developing institutional values for CT State (see Appendix AF). Ten overarching values have been identified and the group is working on refining and operationalizing them. Once these steps are complete, the group will present them to the full ESPC group for review and vetting.

Finalization and Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The remainder of the CT State Strategic Plan is under development through a phased approach. The next steps are to: 1) engage with stakeholders across the institution and constituents from the business community, 2) gather and review feedback, and 3) communicate the plan. As noted in the timeline below, regular communication about the strategic planning process is planned with multiple opportunities for feedback and review. The CT State strategic plan will be reviewed for approval by the leadership by late spring 2022 and will then go through an annual review process with revisions over the first three years (2022-2025).

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

January 2022	Revise strategic plan based on feedback from CT State leadership
February 2022	Disseminate revised draft to entire college community, including faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders for review/feedback
March 2022	Revise strategic plan based on feedback from the college community
April 2022	Disseminate updated draft to college community for final review/validation
May 2022	Submit strategic plan to CT State leadership and BOR for final approval

Focus on Equity: KPIs and Achieving the Dream

A focus on equity is at the heart of the CT State mission, vision, and strategic plan. To promote equitable student success, the CT State evaluation framework is grounded in the 23 KPIs adopted by the BOR in October 2018. These KPIs are based on national GP best practices and reflect institutional and system priorities such as enrollment, persistence, and retention.

The KPIs are updated every Fall and are available on a [public dashboard](#). To further advance equity, all 12 colleges joined ATD by June 2019 and started a three-year process to evaluate their capacity for a data-informed

focus on student equity. All 12 colleges completed the ATD Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool in Winter 2020 to assess their capacity to undergo this redesign and change plans were finalized in Spring 2020. In academic year 2020-2021, each college aligned their ATD activities with those of CT State. CT State Leadership will be renegotiating the relationship with ATD in Spring 2022 to determine the level of support that ATD will provide over the next several years.

Enrollment Management (EM) Plan and Council

CT State developed a three-year enrollment management (EM) plan in 2019 to bridge the transition to a single institution (see Appendix AG) and established a statewide Enrollment Management Council (EMC) in 2021 (see Appendix AH). The statewide EM plan, reviewed annually by the EMC, was intended to serve as a tool to align the college enrollment management plans prior to the merger and to serve as a communication channel for the CT State leadership and the colleges on matters related to enrollment (see Standard 5).

Data Governance Council

The newly formed Data Governance Council (DGC), which includes CSCU and CT State representatives, was charged in Fall 2021 (see Appendix AI). Through the council, CT State leadership ensures that it will retain decision authority in data matters that originate with CSCU Human Resources and Finance and with CSCU Information Technology (IT). The Council plans to complete its review of available data products and begin the policy-making process for data standards, security, and auditing by April 2022. The recently appointed CSCU Data Privacy Officer will collaborate with the DGC and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning (IE&P) to establish system-wide policies on CT State applicant and student data collection.

Actions to Be Completed Prior to July 2023

Technology Infrastructure

Central to effective institutional research is a technology infrastructure that will support the research and information needs of a large, multi-campus community college. To advance towards this goal, CT State is developing a clear governance process for technology review, approval, and deployment across the 12 CT State campuses. A Technology Steering Committee will be formed in 2022 with representatives from CT State leadership, CSCU Office of

IT, and the colleges to review the selection of technology platforms. Work is also underway to launch a new, consolidated iteration of the student information system, Ellucian Banner, with modules to support admissions (CRM Recruit), advising (CRM Advise), and registration (Ellucian Experience). The first online modules will launch in January 2022 with full operations available by March 2023 when registration opens for CT State (see Standard 5).

Institutional Effectiveness and Planning (IE&P)

The CT State interim AVP IE&P (appointed in January 2021) oversees a team shown in the diagram below. For IR, the AVP IE&P responds to federal and state reporting requirements while the Regional IR Directors each supervise staff at the colleges who focus on the day-to-day requests. The Director of Regional and Specialized Accreditation is working with program coordinators and 29 national professional organizations to ensure the transition of the existing specialized accreditations, recognitions, and approvals to CT State (see Appendix AJ).

By July 2022, IE&P organizational changes will begin to reframe the current, geographically based Regional IR Directors to functionally based Senior Directors, each with a focus on a particular IR area to support CT State as a whole (the proposed organizational chart is below). Each college/campus and region will continue to have an IR contact person to manage the receipt and delivery of requests to the appropriate functional team and maintain the highest level of service.

Actions Planned After July 2023

Facilities Master Planning

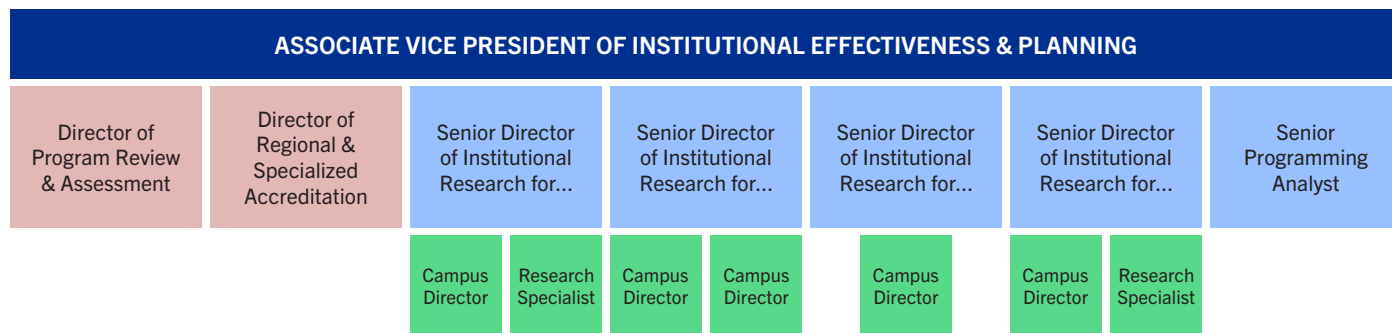
CT State leadership will develop a prioritized list for all necessary facilities upgrades, deferred maintenance, and long-range master planning across all campuses. Leadership will also work closely with campus CEOs, the CSCU Facilities Office, and the CT Bond Commission to define the needs for ongoing capital funding. Ongoing work is needed to align the current 12 colleges' facilities master plans into a single master plan that prioritizes campuses with more critical facilities' needs while also aligning with long-range academic planning.

Assessment

The Director of Program Review and Assessment, reporting to the Provost, will coordinate statewide academic program review (APR) efforts to assure regular and consistent evaluation of the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of academic programs (see Standard 8). To build an institutional and campus culture committed to continuous improvement, the CT State leadership team will regularly share and discuss performance toward goals with Regional Presidents and CEOs.

Conclusion

During the work to plan and build CT State, the College will maintain partnerships with national leaders in the community college reform agenda. During the first few years of CT State's operation, there will be opportunities for stakeholders throughout the College to be involved in developing a new strategic plan for 2025 and beyond that further prioritizes the College's goals.



STANDARD THREE: Organization & Governance

CT State will be a merger of the 12 individual community colleges, who already share a common governing Board of Regents (BOR), into a single institution. While the CSCU System Office has, historically, provided centralized support in certain areas that were common among the colleges (e.g., Student Information System technical support), the colleges have had individual operations, policy interpretations, and internal governing structures. In preparation for the completion of the merger, leadership (initially in the System Office and later in CT State)

- designed a governance structure to support the transition;
- designed a separate governance structure for the merged college; and
- ensured the organizational design is sufficient to fully support the merged college, separate and apart from the CSCU system office.

The CT State structure is a single entity with multiple campuses. CT State will have common policies, a single catalog of aligned academic programs and curricula, a statewide governance structure that incorporates and preserves local campus governance bodies, and a matrixed organizational structure that is designed to support equitable student success and greater fiscal health across the institution. The organizational structure for CT State can be found in Appendix AK.

Response to the Commission's Concerns

Faculty/Staff Participation in Formation of CT State (Special Attention Area #2)

The Commission requested in the July 2021 and October 2021 letters a discussion on faculty and staff participation in the consolidation process. Seven hundred and thirteen individual faculty, staff, and administrators have participated in consolidation activities of some form (e.g., committee/work group, alignment, feedback, endorsement). Full-time faculty comprised approximately 63% of the number of individuals participating in some way, although participation levels varied by individual. A comprehensive list of all CT State committee/work groups and participants (2018-2021) and all curriculum alignment

participants (2020-2021) with name and function, sorted by institution is available [here](#).

CT State Committees and Work Groups

CT State was built by the work of hundreds of dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators. The transitional governance bodies included:

- College Consolidation Implementation Committee (CCIC);
- Students First Academic and Student Affairs Consolidation Committee (SF ASA CC); and
- Aligned Program Review Committee (APRC) as our transitional curriculum governance body.

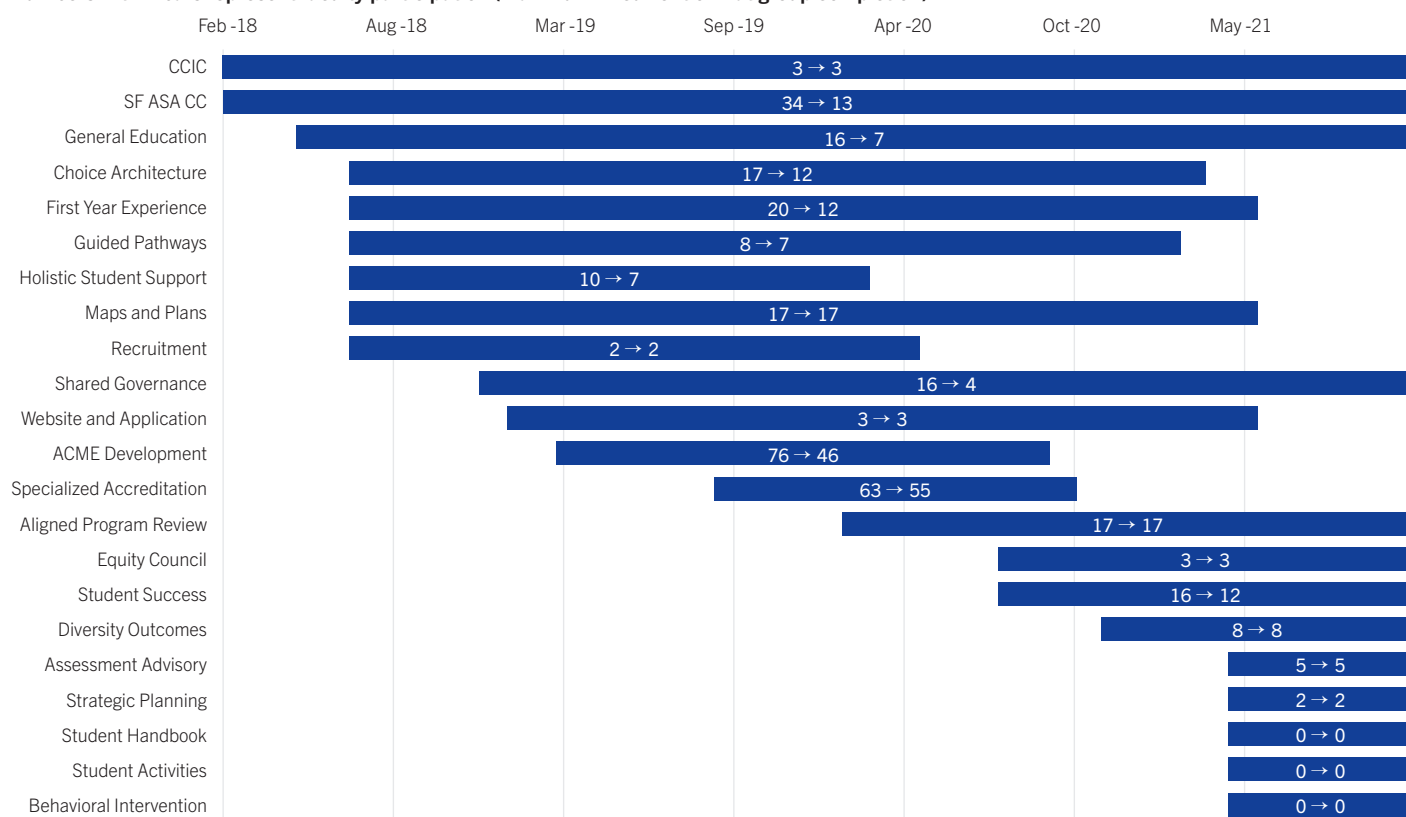
The table below lists additional committees and work groups that played a significant role in the various aspects of the formation of CT State.

Aligned Program Review Committee	Serve as transitional curriculum review committee
Alignment & Completion of Math & English	Promote college-level course completion in first year
Assessment Advisory Committee	Develop systems to advance all forms of assessment
Behavioral Intervention Design	Create process to positively respond to behaviors
Choice Architecture	Promote early choice & remove success barriers
CT State Success Team	Examine data & promote equity to help all students
Diversity Outcomes	Develop outcomes for diversity requirement
Equity Council	Develop equitable & inclusive policies & practices
First-Year Experience	Develop a first-year experience course
General Education	Develop general education core for CT State
Guided Pathways Task Force	Improve student success with Guided Pathways
Holistic Student-Support Redesign	Redesign advising & student-support services
Program Maps & Academic/Career Plans	Develop guidelines for academic & career plans
Recruitment Architecture	Streamline enrollment & strengthen partnerships
Shared Governance	Craft a governance structure proposal for CT State
Specialized Accredited Programs	Gather accreditation data to inform next steps
Student Activities	Develop a structure for student clubs & activities
Student Handbook	Create a common student handbook for CT State
Website & Streamlined Application	Inform website design, inquiry & application

At the peak, 468 faculty, staff, administrators, students, and foundation members joined the effort through service on these committees/work groups, with full-time faculty comprising 49.1% of the total membership across the groups. In total, approximately 34% of all full-time faculty across the 12 colleges engaged in at least one work group or committee, although participation levels varied by individual.

Committee and Work Group Timeline and Faculty Participation

Numbers within bars represent faculty participation (maximum → current or # at group completion)



The chart above presents the timeline of each committee/work group as well as the number of full-time faculty participating in each. Please note that some full-time faculty members participated in multiple groups, therefore the numbers within the chart contain duplicates.

In addition to formal group membership, CT State has regularly solicited, welcomed, and considered faculty and staff input. For example, the Alignment and Completion of Math and English (ACME) proposal, which will impact all CT State students, was distributed to all 12 community colleges for feedback in late Fall 2020. Subsequently, 22 individuals and just over 20 college governance and/or faculty groups submitted responses to the proposal, totaling 87 pages of commentary and feedback. The ACME group leadership carefully considered the feedback, and many of the recommendations were incorporated into the [final proposal approved by the BOR](#) in May 2021. (See Standard 4 for *Faculty Participation in ACME, Special Attention Area #7*.)

Following a similar process, the Shared Governance work group recently revised the CT State governance proposal based on extensive input received through a variety of channels. Although challenging to quantify all contribu-

tions (such as the number of individuals who provided input during college meetings), many hundreds of faculty and staff throughout the system contributed valuable ideas that substantially shaped and strengthened these proposals, and all feedback was carefully considered leading to modifications and refinement. (See Standard 4 for *Faculty/Staff Participation in Curriculum Alignment Work, Special Attention Area #6*.)

Organization & Governance (Special Attention Area #3)

Organization Structure

Throughout the development of CT State, teams first from the CSCU System Office and later the CT State leadership, designed the institution's organizational structure. Starting in 2017, leadership worked closely with staff from NECHE (then NEASC) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to guide this development. Particular attention has been placed on designing a structure that adequately supports the CT State academic enterprise and forming clear roles and responsibilities of governance that build upon governance bodies that currently exist.

The updated organizational chart (see Appendix AK) is the result of a detailed development process that includes input gathered through almost two years of leadership team meetings with hundreds of stakeholders. These stakeholders included the 12 college CEOs/Presidents; three Regional Presidents; participants of college-wide town hall meetings at eight of the 12 colleges; and other constituent groups. From Spring 2020 to Fall 2021, the hundreds of meetings generated very helpful feedback to the proposed model that resulted in many beneficial changes that clarified responsibilities.

The diagram below shows the intricate relationships between the three organizational levels of CT State (the College/blue, three Regions/green, and 12 Campuses/pink) as well as the role of the CSCU System Office (shown in yellow). Where shared responsibility exists for functions, color gradients are used to indicate this; however, in all such functions, overall responsibility rests with the CT State college administration. Information about the roles and responsibilities of the CT State President, Regional Presidents, and Campus CEOs is included in a section below.

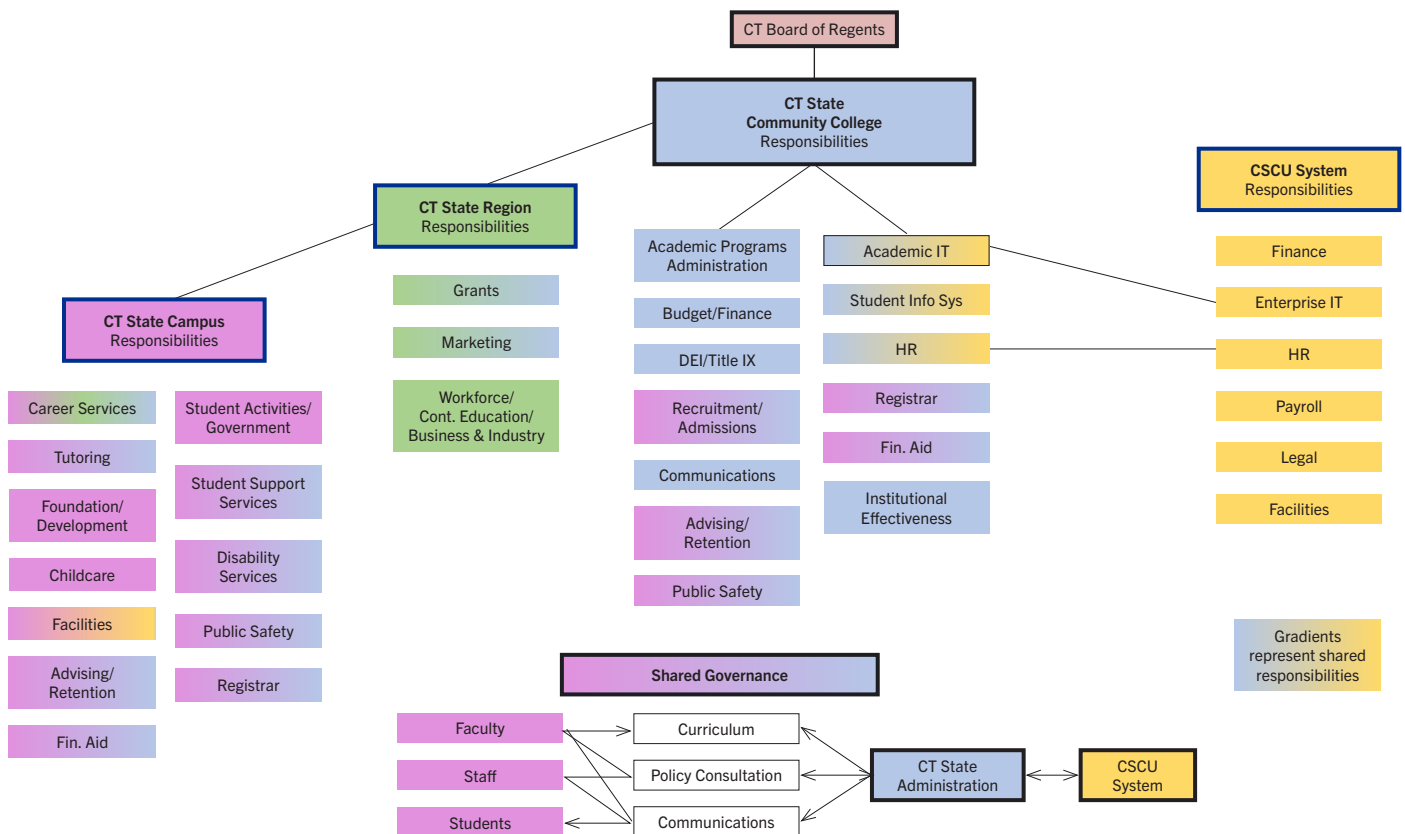
All authority ultimately resides with the BOR who delegates that authority to the CSCU President and CT State

President to ensure that the institution operates in accordance with NECHE accreditation standards, all federal and state regulations and statues, and BOR policies. The existing colleges have maintained NECHE accreditation for many decades and that same clarity of authority, responsibilities, and decision-making have been built into CT State. Detailed information about shared governance for CT State is provided in the sections below.

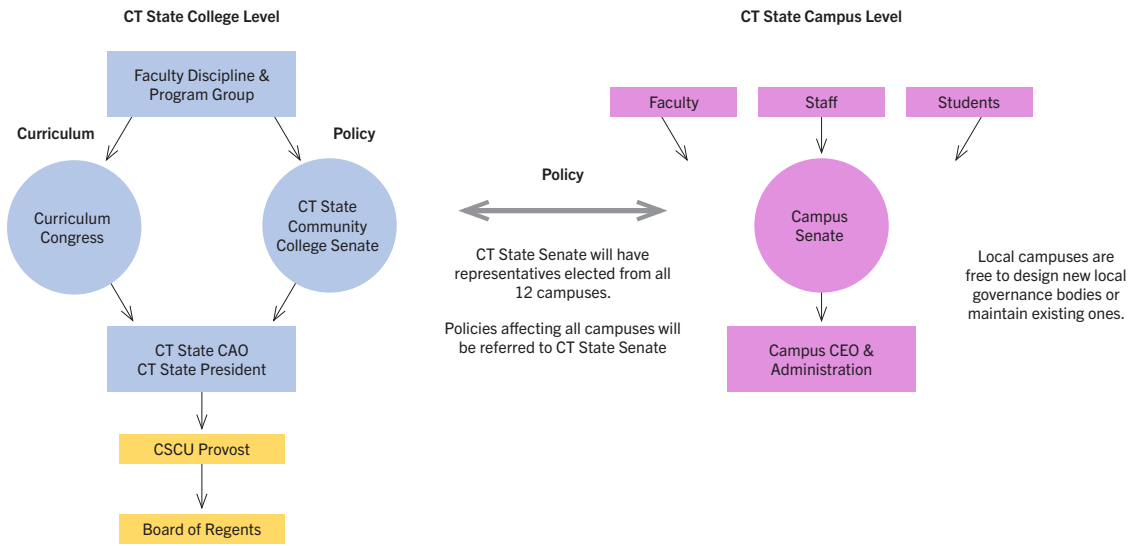
Faculty/Staff Voice in Governance and Decision-Making (Special Attention Area #4)

Governance Structure

The governance structure that will be launched for CT State in Spring 2022 is shown below. It is based on the governance models at the individual colleges that have existed for many years. The CT State model includes two statewide governance bodies, the College Senate, and the Curriculum Congress. Each shall be representative of all campuses and college constituents (faculty, staff, and students). In addition, each campus will continue to have their own local campus governance bodies that will forward items to the statewide College Senate if the issue affects CT State broadly. Students will also have a role in all aspects of governance including membership on both



CT State Standard 3 Organization & Governance Structure to Ensure Inclusive Governance



statewide elected bodies. This structure has been designed to provide a substantive voice for all stakeholders in the planning and operation of CT State.

The College Senate will focus on crafting policy and procedural recommendations to the College administration, while the Curriculum Congress will review and vet all curricular proposals for CT State. Both bodies are built with significant faculty representation. The College Senate will be comprised of 39 voting members: three elected representatives from each campus (12 total full-time faculty, 12 total professional/classified staff, and 12 total non-management members) plus one student government representative elected from each of the three regions in CT State (three total students). The Curriculum Congress will be comprised of 33 voting members. Ongoing regular assessment of the CT State Governance Model is planned. (See Standard 4 for *Faculty/Staff Participation in Curriculum Alignment Work, Special Attention Area #6.*)

Shared Governance (Special Attention Area #5)

As indicated above, each college currently has local governance bodies that provide a voice to all campus community members. These existing bodies will remain, with each college determining how to align their local governance bodies to the new governance structure for CT State. However, the existing model for student government will be adjusted to reflect the new college structure to make certain that all campuses have representation and separate student activities budgets that reflect enrollment at

each campus, ensuring that students receive direct benefit from student fees.

The Shared Governance Work Group convened in 2018 to develop the internal governance structure (see Appendix AL). The initial governance proposal was presented in Spring 2021 to the colleges for consideration. Following feedback, faculty representation was expanded. An updated diagram for curriculum development and approval was included in the shared governance proposal to clarify the faculty role. The revised proposal was approved by SF ASA CC and presented to CCIC in January 2022 for approval in February 2022 (see Appendix AM).

The updated proposal includes a timeframe for implementation that begins with governance elections at all 12 colleges, taking place in Fall 2022. As with the current processes at the colleges, faculty continue to remain at the center of the CT State curricular development and approval process. Curricula proposals will continue to emanate from faculty within CT State and this can occur at a variety of levels (e.g., individual faculty members, collaborative faculty groups, campus faculty, or program/disciplinary faculty groups) within the new statewide academic department structure (see Standard 6).

In response to the Commission's October 2021 letter, it is noted that there appears to be a misperception by those providing public comment that curriculum will be campus-based in CT State; however, all curriculum for CT State will belong to the entire institution as part of a single academic catalog. This curriculum alignment will also ease student transfers to upper-division institutions.

Historically, the colleges have offered academic programs with similar names, but these programs have often differed in content, admission requirement, and/or prerequisite structure. For CT State, these same programs have been, or are currently undergoing, curriculum alignment by program faculty for inclusion in the CT State catalog. Legacy academic programs at the 12 colleges will be discontinued by Fall 2023 with crosswalk maps in place for students to transition from legacy programs to aligned programs of CT State.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

Leadership Structure and Transition

In May 2020, the BOR appointed a CT State leadership team consisting of an interim President, interim Provost/CAO, interim Vice President for Administration/CFO, and a Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA). This team also includes the three Regional Presidents, who were hired in 2019. The permanent Vice President for Administration/CFO was named in January 2022. The search has been launched for the permanent CT State President and the permanent Provost/CAO will be sought following the appointment of the permanent president.

The Regional Presidents play a key role in the CT State structure, providing leadership and support for the campus CEOs as their direct supervisors. Regional Presidents support campus efforts to improve student access and success; work to secure additional funding; engage with local, state, and national stakeholders to increase support for the campuses; lead regional and statewide continuing education, workforce, and business and industry efforts; assist with regional marketing and recruitment initiatives; and drive opportunities for greater fiscal sustainability. The Regional Presidents will be instrumental in ensuring policies and practices adopted by the BOR or CT State leadership are implemented consistently at the campus level and that both challenges and opportunities that arise at the campus level are elevated across campuses and to the CT State President.

Beginning in 2023, CEOs will be primarily responsible for management of day-to-day campus operations, local community relations/outreach, campus fundraising/resource development and foundation support, oversight of campus-related budgets, management of physical campus buildings and facilities, and management of local student and faculty-related issues. The CEOs will continue to play a critical role in supporting the local learning environ-

ment and ensuring students have the resources they need to learn and succeed. They will also identify local concerns and consult with the Regional Presidents to find or advocate for local, regional, and statewide solutions.

CT State has invested significant effort to prepare for the transition of staff into the new structure with minimal disruption to students and employees.

Actions to Be Completed by Prior to July 2023

Matrix Organization

The structure of CT State as outlined above is highly matrixed. This presents a departure from existing operations for most college staff. The structure anticipates several formal cross-functional teams that will advise CT State leadership on college operations. While some operational teams have been identified, over the coming months a more robust set of operational groups and processes will be clarified to support the matrix structure.

Policy Review

A review is nearing completion of all BOR academic, student, auditing, and financial policies (see Standards 4, 5, and 7). Recommendations will be advanced to ensure clear and consistent language and alignment of all supporting procedures for implementation prior to July 2023.

Governance Meetings

In keeping with CT State's role as a public entity, all CT State governance bodies will meet in public session and all agendas will be posted in advance to the college website. Reorganization of both the BOR Student and Faculty Advisory Committees is being considered to better reflect the strategic initiatives of the single college. For example, the Student Advisory Committee will review its membership, quorum structure, and bylaws. A regular review cycle will be established for all college policies and procedures.

Actions Planned After July 2023

Standards Two and Eight outline the commitment to continuous improvement fundamental to the operations of CT State. The Director of Assessment will ensure regular assessment of both the organizational and governance structures and college policies and procedures to ensure an optimal environment to support teaching and learning and to advance CT State's vision. A strategic priority for CT State will be to coordinate and expand dual enrollment

agreements with many of the state's high schools, expanding the number of students, particularly first generation and students of color to access college credits, closely following NECHE's standards on dual enrollment credit.

Conclusion

An undertaking of this complexity has created a significant degree of apprehension. Communication, though regular and varied in format, has been inadequate. The leadership team is committed to improving communications to better support the organizational change. The CT State Director of Communication and Strategic Marketing was named in the Fall of 2021 and is providing critical support in this area. CSCU President, Terrence Cheng, recently completed an extensive listening tour across the state, supported by the CT State Vice President for Administration/CFO and the Regional Presidents. The questions raised formed the basis of a new communication plan. Improved communications related to the transition are an organizational priority (see Standard 9).

STANDARD FOUR: The Academic Program

As mature, accredited institutions, the colleges have successfully developed programs of study needed by the state and our students. Over 640 individual associate degrees, 330 individual credit certificates, and more than 4,000 credit courses existed prior to curricular alignment. These duplicative programs had inconsistent requirements, course titles, and outcomes which, confuse students and hamper transfer. Curricular alignment has brought together the most effective elements from the colleges to meet the mission and purposes of CT State. All aligned curricula will continue to comply with established guidelines and credit limits for associate degrees and certificate programs.

In addition to providing a more consistent and higher quality experience for students, a consolidated academic structure enhances our ability to meet burgeoning workforce needs. There is a great demand for trained workers and no single college can fulfill these needs. CT State Regional Workforce Development Officers are working to address this as a statewide problem of capacity and are deploying resources where needed to satisfy employment needs.

In Fall 2021, CT State representatives were appointed to the statewide Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC), which is led by the Office of Workforce Strategy and includes industry partners in IT, manufacturing, and healthcare, collaborating to better meet labor needs of local industry. CT State is a critical partner and is featured prominently in the GWC Strategic Plan (see Appendix AN).

Response to the Commission’s Concerns

Faculty/Staff Participation in Curriculum Alignment (Special Attention Area #6)

CT State Curriculum-Alignment Work

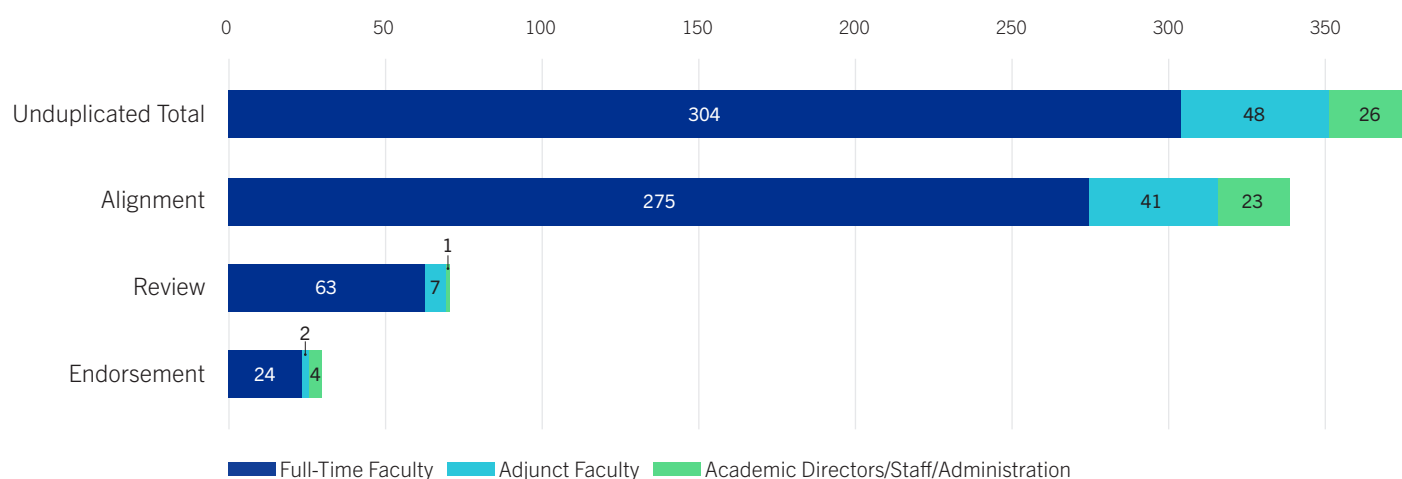
Curriculum alignment for CT State was a significant and complex undertaking. Managed by the Aligned Program Review Committee (APRC), a group with representation from all community colleges and with 75% of the membership comprised of full-time faculty (see Appendix AO), CT State has implemented an approach to curriculum alignment that respected the NECHE standards, followed the principles of shared governance throughout

the transition, and provided multiple opportunities for faculty input.

The development of aligned curricula for CT State was based on currently offered programs at the colleges that were approved through local governance structures and the CSCU governing bodies (see Appendix AP). During the alignment process, hundreds of faculty members from all colleges collaborated to identify, review, and analyze both common and unique programs with a special emphasis on common course titles, numbers, prerequisites, corequisites, descriptions, credits, and student learning outcomes. Six curriculum-alignment managers (all current/former faculty members) provided support and direction to the program faculty work groups who have ownership of their curriculum.

Faculty were continually invited to participate, and financial compensation was provided. In late Spring 2020, 198 faculty members (full- and part-time) signaled their willingness to participate in response to a renewed invitation from the leadership team (see Standard 3 and Appendix AQ). Between 2020 and 2021, 378 unduplicated faculty and academic staff members engaged in at least one part of the curriculum-alignment process. This number includes 303 unduplicated faculty from the community colleges (one faculty participant from a state university has been excluded from this number). In total, approximately 47% of all full-time faculty across the 12 colleges engaged in at least one part of the curriculum alignment process. The chart below shows the number of full-time faculty; adjunct faculty; and academic directors, staff, and administrators who participated at least once in each of these steps.

Participation in Curriculum Alignment, Review, and Endorsement



NOTE: Participation levels varied by individual, and some individuals participated in multiple steps, therefore they are counted separately within the alignment, review, and/or endorsement numbers. The participant counts do not include faculty and academic staff who participated outside the purview of the curriculum-alignment management team such as individuals who were involved through direct contact with their work groups or state-wide discipline groups. Alignment participants engaged in at least one part of the curriculum-alignment process.

After review of the aligned curriculum by the APRC, each program-alignment proposal is sent to each of the 12 colleges’ governance bodies and publicly posted online for review and feedback during an endorsement period for open-ended commentary and critique. Hundreds of full- and part-time faculty have provided input or feedback during the curricular-review process. Since Fall 2020, APRC representatives submitted over 1,925 comments of feedback gathered from the colleges, which have provided the opportunity for ongoing curriculum modification and refinement as part of the comprehensive curriculum-alignment process.

Response to the Commission’s Concern

Faculty Participation in ACME (Special Attention Area #7)

In March 2019, an Alignment and Completion of Math and English (ACME) Work Group was authorized by the CSCU Provost to begin researching a redesign of developmental education in English and mathematics based on work that the CSCU Student Success Center had done over the previous few years in collaboration with the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin and other national partners. The ACME Work Group was composed of faculty, staff, and administrators from all 17 CSCU institutions as well as the University of Connecticut.

The ACME Work Group presented a final report to the BOR in October 2020 and a policy proposal was drafted

and shared with all stakeholders in April and May 2021 for feedback. Some raised concerns about the timeframe for implementation of the policy and the elimination of prerequisite requirements for students. The Coalition of Connecticut English Teachers (CCET) opposed the policy, arguing that some students should continue to be required to take prerequisite courses, whereas the proposed ACME policy eliminated prerequisites and required a faculty-designed curriculum with corequisite supports. The [ACME policy](#) follows national best practices in community college English and mathematics remediation efforts to increase student success by reducing or removing barriers to their success, namely additional prerequisite coursework.

In September 2021, two new groups were formed to lead ACME design and implementation work: 1) the ACME Core Steering Committee, composed of faculty and staff who are charged with leading the curricula planning and implementation work and 2) a larger ACME Advisory Council that receives current information on design and implementation work, identifies concerns or needs related to the ongoing work, and communicates with both the Core Steering Committee and back to their constituents. Both work groups receive extensive monthly updates on curriculum progress for the ACME policy implementation. English and math faculty have been asked to present curricula proposals in Spring 2022 for adoption into all CT State degree programs.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

General Education

Prior to the planned merger, faculty from the 17 CSCU institutions worked collaboratively to develop transfer degrees to satisfy the Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP) for programs that guarantee transfer as rising juniors to the CSCU universities. The TAP framework requires a 30-credit general education (“Framework”) core (see Appendix AR) that is paired with a 30-credit program core for specified programs. The TAP Framework and Implementation Review Committee (FIRC), with representatives from the 12 colleges, developed a process to assess general education outcomes across the institutions to ensure delivery of consistent course content and comprehensive assessment of student learning outcomes.

Leveraging the TAP “framework,” the new 21-25 credit CT State general education core was approved by the BOR in May 2020 (see Appendix AS) to be used in all non-TAP programs in CT State. Due to the TAP framework, outcomes were already in place for the majority of the general education categories, which include instruction in arts and humanities, English composition, math/quantitative reasoning, oral/written communication, scientific reasoning/ knowledge and understanding, social/behavioral sciences/historical knowledge, and an embedded diversity requirement.

The proposal for the CT State general education core was developed between May 2018 and December 2019 by a General Education workgroup comprised of faculty and staff elected from each of the 12 colleges. Upon BOR approval, FIRC was subsequently charged with reviewing and revising the current TAP Framework outcomes and creating additional outcomes for the CT State general education categories as needed. In addition, a Diversity Outcomes Work Group was formed in Spring 2021 and charged with developing recommendations regarding outcomes to meet the embedded diversity requirement. These recommendations were made available for review and public comment in Fall 2021 and will be finalized in Spring 2022.

Credit Curriculum Alignment (Rounds 1-4)



Sixty-seven programs (50 degrees and 17 certificates) have completed full review by APRC and CT State transitional governance committees, according to the process shown above, and were approved by the BOR between June 2021 and December 2021. All feedback was reviewed by APRC and shared with faculty work groups and transitional governance bodies.

Non-Credit Curriculum Alignment and Regional Workforce Initiatives

The three CT State Regional Workforce Development Offices have been aligning workforce development programs that are offered at more than one college. As of January 2022, six workforce programs have been aligned in preparation for implementation in Fall 2022: Dental Assistant; Emergency Medical Technician; Medical Administrative Assistant; Pharmacy Technician; Bookkeeper; and Central Sterile Processing Technician.

Academic Policy Alignment

A significant deliverable needed for the development of a single CT State catalog is the review and alignment of policies and procedures used across the 12 individual colleges. A primary goal of this policy review has been to minimize additional substantive policy changes until the permanent CT State shared governance structure is in place (see Standard 3). To date, 24 major academic policies have been reviewed. In most cases, the revisions include updating language specific to CT State without substantively changing the existing policy. These wording changes will be brought forward to the BOR-ASA and the BOR as information items for approval in February 2022. These updates have been reviewed by the Community College Academic Deans Council and will move through the CT State transitional governance structure before being considered by the BOR.

Actions to Be Completed by July 2023

Credit Curriculum Alignment (Rounds 5-11)

A total of 257 programs (and their related aligned courses) are scheduled for review and board approval by June 2022 (see Appendix AT):

- 67 aligned programs already approved by the BOR in 2021
- 142 programs (79 degrees and 63 certificates, in APRC rounds 5-8) have completed initial review by the CT State transitional governance committees between September 2021 and December 2021 and are currently in the endorsement process
 - Anticipated to go to the BOR for final approval between February 2022 and April 2022
- 48 programs (35 degrees and 13 certificates, in APRC rounds 9-11) are scheduled for review by transitional governance committees and endorsement in Spring 2022
 - Board approval is anticipated to follow in May 2022 and June 2022

The following course topics are also scheduled for review and board approval by June 2022:

- Anthropology, College and Career Success, Computer Applications, English co-requisites, Health, Honors, Interdisciplinary Studies, Math pathways and co-requisites, Philosophy, Science (generic), Social Science (generic), and Women's Studies

Accreditations for specialized programs will move from legacy colleges to CT State by July 2023.

Non-Credit Curriculum Alignment

The following workforce development (non-credit) programs are currently being aligned with the expectation of being available by July 2023:

- CompTIA A+, Certified Nurse Aide, Phlebotomy Technician, Medical Billing and Coding, Manufacturing, EKG Technician, Ophthalmic Assistant, Personal Care Assistant, Personal Trainer, Security Guard, Real Estate, and Veterinary Assistant

Catalog Development

In preparation for a Fall 2023 opening, CT State is finalizing development of a single academic catalog. The back-end build of the catalog, using the Acalog digital technology platform, began in Spring 2021 and the “go live” date is projected for Fall 2022. Since CT State will begin accepting student applications in Fall 2022, a draft (transitional) version of the catalog will be available for students,

staff, and faculty by October 2022 and the official 2023-24 catalog, with all remaining content and edits finalized, will be available by May 2023. Goals, objectives, and learning outcomes for CT State curricula will be included in the catalog, course outlines, and/or various other published documentation for academic programs. Policies for some specialized programs, such as Nursing and other accredited programs, will also be available in program-specific policy manuals and handbooks for CT State, as was the case for many programs in the 12 legacy colleges.

Academic Quality, Consistency, and Effectiveness

The transition of the academic programs at the current colleges to CT State is focused on ensuring academic quality, consistency, and effectiveness on all campuses in alignment with CT State's mission and purposes. As the launch of CT State in Fall 2023 draws near, the CT State Associate Vice President of Academic Operations and the Director of Scheduling and Online Programs will work closely with the Associate Vice President of Academic Programs and Curriculum and academic program-area and department leaders for CT State to develop the schedule and delivery methods of credit courses each academic term.

Pathways and Partnerships

Expanding the academic structure for CT State, the Associate Vice President of Higher Education Transitions will assure ongoing development and maintenance of relevant transfer pathways and high school partnership programs. Although there is a common policy, the 12 colleges currently receive separate funding from the CT Department of Education and have distinct Perkins grants, high school partnerships, and dual-enrollment programs. CT State leadership is working with the CT Department of Education to merge these initiatives.

All consortium agreements and contractual arrangements, such as those with hospital facilities for our allied health programs and with corporate partners for our automotive, railroad, and manufacturing programs, will be rewritten to name the new college as CT State prior to July 1, 2023. All agreements will be reviewed to ensure consistency with other similar arrangements in other parts of the state. CT State will develop an agreement with our sister institution, Charter Oak State College, to be the provider of Prior Learning Assessments for any students seeking credit for prior learning, in addition to assisting with course design and being a transfer partner to help with student retention and graduation. The Transfer Articulation Policy (TAP) that was established by the BOR will need to be updated to name CT State as the entity with which all transfer agreements are made with our state university partners.

Actions Planned After July 2023

Academic Quality, Consistency, and Effectiveness

CT State administration is committed to an annual, rotating policy-review schedule and process to ensure currency and alignment with the CT State mission and vision as well as relevant federal and state regulations. Assessment work that the 12 colleges are doing separately now will transition to the new statewide CT State structure under the leadership of the Director of Program Review and Assessment (see Standard 8).

In addition to enhancements made to online delivery of courses and programs during the pandemic, the individual colleges advanced the adoption of accelerated terms within the standard 15-week semesters to help address needs of non-traditional learners. The duration and frequency of these accelerated terms have varied widely across the colleges. Accelerated options will be aligned in CT State using a 7-1-7-week format to deliver programming during the spring and fall semesters.

Conclusion

With Fall 2023 as a target, the CT State team has made a significant progress to align all degrees, certificates, and courses and provide coherent and high-quality curricular offerings. Faculty are working to streamline duplicate programs while maintaining unique programs. Despite clear progress on curriculum and intensive communications, the consolidation process has been a heavy lift. Team leaders are committed to building on successes, addressing problems and concerns head-on, maintaining open channels of communication, and fostering a collaborative and collegial environment.

At the same time, despite union objections, benefits of the curriculum-alignment process have emerged. Students can complete most general education courses at any of the 12 campuses and the aligned curriculum will allow for a seamless transition for students who move between campuses. The consistency in course titles, numbers, prerequisites, corequisites, credits, descriptions, and student-learning outcomes in a single catalog for CT State will ensure academic quality and integrity in the award of academic credit. On the course level, students taking advanced-level courses and program electives will have consistent foundational learning outcomes, college-wide assessment will be easier and more robust with a common curriculum, and faculty from different campuses can easily share curricular and instructional ideas.

STANDARD FIVE: Students

The formation of CT State was grounded in two key objectives: improving the financial stability of community college operations in the wake of steep enrollment declines and improving student success. A single college provides a way to remove barriers for students, implement student-success reforms at scale, and provide the resources to address years of under-investment in infrastructure and staff development at individual colleges. For example, the collective enrollment of CT State is expected to meet the threshold for designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by the U.S. Department of Education. An application will be submitted to seek this designation once CT State is formed. This fuels our commitment to reversing CT's opportunity gap. Substantial work has been accomplished to ensure that CT State meets required standards related to students when the colleges merge.

Response to the Commission's Concerns

■ Students (Special Attention Area #8)

Enrollment Projections

The June 2021 update to the Commission outlined CT State's model for enrollment projections. While components have been revised (see Appendix A) based on Fall 2021 actuals and college retention patterns, the model is still used. The model included three components:

1. **Baseline enrollment trends:** The model uses historical data for two-year public college in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic going back to 2000. The CT State model considered two approaches to the baseline model. The first approach places greater weight on the distant past to project future trends; the second places greater weight on the more recent three years. The two models provided a "trends continue" and a "trends reverse" projection. The 2021 projection model also considered qualitative data to arrive at a baseline projection. The most significant change between 2021 and 2022 is a revision of the estimate for the reengagement of students who stopped attending in the pandemic. The 2021 model assumed an optimistic "COVID bounce" of 75%; however, the enrollment-management team has been monitoring re-engagement of stop-outs

and projections have been revised to include a more measured curve with a return rate of 25% over time.

2. **PACT:** CT's free community college program, the Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT), was launched in Fall 2020 without state appropriations. Funded in the first year by the BOR with \$6 million in System Office reserves, the program could not fully meet the demand. Full funding for the program was not resolved until May 2021, with the State Appropriations Committee identifying funding in FY 22 and FY 23 as well as a permanent funding source for the program. Late funding, after most traditional-age students had decided on college plans, presented recruitment challenges in FY 2022. The challenges have been addressed and more robust marketing is underway.
3. **Guided Pathways Advising:** As part of the student-success reforms under the "Guided Pathways" umbrella, the BOR committed to investing in academic advising to support student persistence and success. Enrollment projections factor in increases in college retention rates as the Guided Pathways advisors are hired. While it is still early to fully assess, the early indicators support a strong impact on retention (see below for details).

Enrollment Management Plan

The community colleges in CT are committed to the mission of open access. The CT State Strategic Enrollment (EM) Management Plan (see Appendix AG), developed in 2019 and serves as a transitional planning document prior to the merger, articulates this commitment. The three-year plan outlines enrollment goals related to maintaining the current market share of traditional-age students, growing the adult learner population, and retention. Since the colleges have unique enrollment-management plans that align with the statewide plan to varying degrees, the focus of the transition has been on providing greater collaboration while still acknowledging individual college goals. The CT State Strategic EM Plan undergoes annual review and assessment by the cross-functional and cross-college Enrollment Management Council. It was last updated in Spring 2021 and will be updated in Spring 2022.

The adult-learner segment, both in numbers and as a percentage of the enrollment, has fallen in recent years and it is acknowledged that this trend must be reversed. To that end, the CT State AVP for Recruitment, Admissions and Community Outreach is working closely with each college to address adult-learner issues. CT State has engaged with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to identify policy and process barriers for the adult learners. This work is scheduled to be completed in March 2022. One challenge in improving services to non-traditional students has been college operating hours. Precedent and written agreements with some collective bargaining units have made it difficult to change operating hours for student services to include year-round evening hours Monday-Thursday difficult. However, as colleges have hired new advisors, the expectation that staff will work evening hours has been made clear and this has been operationalized for advising. The goal is for the other divisions to follow.

Guided Pathways Advising (GPA)

The Holistic Student-Support Redesign (HSSR) work group was charged with exploring and recommending best practices connected with academic advising, monitoring student progress, designing a common first-year experience and developing wraparound services to address external barriers to student success. The HSSR team created and recommended a Holistic Case-Management Advising (HCMA) policy (see Appendix AU), which defined a new Guided Pathways Advising (GPA) model based on data from national best practices; local expertise; and broad stakeholder feedback including students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The GPA model places diversity,

equity, and inclusion as a central tenet in recruitment, hiring, training and professional learning, advising practice, data collection and disaggregation, and outcomes. The GPA mission and vision statement, which grounds the work, embeds principles that foster DEI and strategically and systematically disrupts structures that promote inequality—for example, by instituting evening advising hours, year-round, to be more supportive of adult learners and working students.

In the new advising model, launched in 2021, students receive regular and strategic outreach, and they engage with their assigned GP advisor to identify short- and long-term goals; develop individualized academic and career plans; and proactively receive appropriate academic and holistic supports that promote persistence, retention, and completion. With this model, every student has an advisor who is an advocate and champion to provide support from start to finish. CRM Advise, the student-success platform, came online in January 2022. The program includes a robust professional development program to support faculty and professional advisors.

The goal for the GPA model was initially set to transition the student-to-advisor ratio from 750:1 to 250:1 by the launch of CT State, but with the support of federal funds, CSCU and CT State leadership accelerated the implementation timeline to mitigate the cataclysmic decline in retention during the pandemic. To date, academic advising staff at the colleges has increased from 65 (before GPA implementation) to 84. By the start of the Fall 2021 semester, GP advisors were fully implemented at three colleges (Housatonic, Middlesex, and Northwestern) with four more fully staffed by the end of December 2021 and the five remaining colleges slated by the end of FY 2022. Early indicators for the program are encouraging. At the first day of the Spring 2022 semester, Northwestern had an 11% increase in headcount over the first day of the Spring 2021 semester. Middlesex outperformed all registration benchmarks for November and December and as of the date of this document, full-time spring enrollment is up 27%. At Housatonic, the Fall-to-Spring retention of first-time, full-time students is up nearly 10 percentage points compared to the same time last year.

The hiring of advisors at all colleges will be complete by the end of Spring 2022, bringing the total number of advising staff to 195 and tripling the original number of staff. To work toward building an advising team that represented the unique diversity of the student body, GPA leadership reviewed the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) information at each college and used

student diversity demographics as benchmarks. Prior to the sustained effort at increasing diversity, typically less than 25% of advising staff members at the colleges identified as a race/ethnicity other than white. The diversity of the GPA team has significantly increased at every level due to these purposeful efforts. The team members identifying as Black/African American, Hispanic, and other races/ethnicities now range from 42-50% on the leadership team, leads, and advisors.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

In addition to the items listed above, CT State would like to call attention to additional work completed in support of adherence to the standard.

EMSA Staff Transition

The migration of staff from the existing colleges to CT State is a work in progress. Impact bargaining will continue with the collective bargaining units to transition staff to new CT roles in a phased approach. CSU anticipates many upcoming retirements resulting from changes to retirement benefits from the state; therefore, planning is underway across all colleges to anticipate the impact of retirements on operations. All replacement positions have been and will continue to be aligned to the future organizational structure.

Admissions

In May 2020, all colleges began using CRM Recruit, an Elucian product, to support admissions and prospect management. CRM Recruit provided admissions staff with the ability to monitor an applicant's progress and provide the necessary outreach to support them through enrollment. The introduction of this product has positively impacted onboarding processes as well as streamlined communication efforts regarding prospects and applicants alike.

In preparation for the launch of the CT State application on October 1, 2022, admissions staff have begun the work to establish best practices and reach consensus on common admissions operating procedures. With the support of InsideTrack and CAEL, the teams have documented existing processes and have identified unnecessary barriers to student onboarding and opportunities for service improvements. At the conclusion of the engagement in March of 2022, clarification on staff roles and a

common process will be documented to support essential training and professional development necessary to guide staff in the newly established practices prior to the CT State application going live.

Financial Aid

Starting in AY 2021-22 all college administered aid programs are under a common procedural manual for both staff and community college students. Under the supervision of the CT State AVP for Financial Aid Services and Title IV Compliance, systemic compliance deficiencies have been addressed through customized training and corrective action.

Professional Development

The Strategic EM Plan includes goals to improve professional development opportunities for staff. A Director of Training and Professional Learning was hired to coordinate all professional development opportunities within EMSA, and CT State has already expanded opportunities during the transition. Staff members also belong to professional development organizations such as American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA), National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), and Connecticut Association of Professional Financial Aid Administrators (CAPFAA) to stay current in best practices.

Student Affairs

In the Spring of 2021, three committees were launched to complete key student-affairs deliverables. The committees made initial recommendations to the CT State Leadership Team on the student handbook, student activities and clubs in the merged institution, and the behavioral intervention procedures/operations for CT State. The recommendations are currently under consideration.

Student Policies and Procedures

CT State has begun to align regulatory and policy interpretations and college operating procedures to support the transition into a single institution (see Standards 3, 4, and 7). The colleges have undertaken cross-functional procedure alignment in other areas such as registration appeals, PACT appeals, and emergency student grants. This alignment will continue during the transition to CT State.

Actions to Be Completed Prior to July 2023

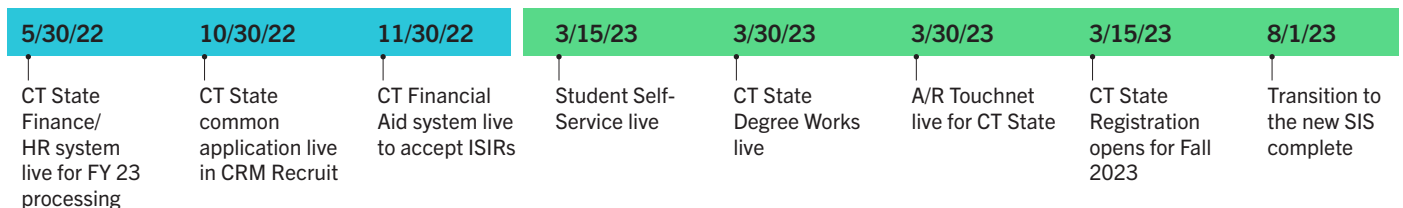
U.S. Department of Education

The success of the merger depends both on approval of NECHE and the successful completion of the U.S. Department of Education merger requirements. Since 2017 the CSCU System Office and CT State leadership have been in regular discussions with the Department on the timelines and requirements necessary to complete the merger. Since there is no formal written guidance provided by the Department, the verbal direction from Region 1 is critical to ensure there is no disruption for students. The Regional Office has identified several key items that must be finished for the merger to approved.

1. All programs must be settled in advance of the merger for inclusion on the E-App. Expected completion May 2022.
2. All student information systems for the merged institution must be in place for transacting purposes. Expected completion March 2023.
3. The E-App with request for merger must be submitted at least one year in advance. All programs and locations will be included. Expected to commence in Spring 2022.
4. In addition, CT State has been advised on the importance of carefully auditing existing federal enrollment reports by location to ensure that all existing college reports are without error prior to formal application.

Infrastructure

Discussions with the U.S. Department of Education made clear the importance the Department places on having a single Student Information System (SIS) completed and able to transact as CT State prior to the merger. In October 2020, the CSCU System Office and CT Leadership team launched the “One College Banner” project to ensure the infrastructure is in place to satisfy the Department’s requirements. The project is on track to meet the following milestones:



Continuous Improvement

Performance measures and benchmarks were established as part of the EMSA Service Level Agreements (see Standard 7). These will be reviewed annually and there are plans to share the evaluations and continuous improvement efforts with the broader community in the future.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated declines in community college enrollment in Connecticut. It has been especially challenging to forecast enrollment when the historic models are no longer useful. In addition, the qualitative decision points that drove the projections in the June 2021 update to the Commission proved to be overly optimistic and the CT State team has taken a far more conservative approach. Managing enrollment across the colleges in the transition has also proved challenging. Individual college operations differ significantly. Retirements in key positions will take time to refill. The ability to move staff among locations will allow for equitable staffing levels.

The EMSA Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) have provided valuable insight into the need to codify norms and clarify communication channels and expectations in a matrixed organization (see Standard 3). As an example, the cross-functional Enrollment Management Council, launched with the intention to help facilitate communication and input regarding statewide goals and objectives, has not been a successful communication vehicle. A new Council will be launched in 2022 under a new charter. While the challenges are significant, cross-college teams have made significant progress in clarifying future roles and responsibilities. The colleges benefit from dedicated student-affairs professionals committed to serving students well in unprecedented times.

STANDARD SIX: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff

The CT State mission statement centers on student success through academically rigorous and innovative education.

To fulfill this mission, as of December 2021, the 12 colleges employ:

- 2,694** faculty members
- 84** advisors
- 84** librarian staff members
- 21** instructional designers with expertise in their respective disciplines

Of the **638 full-time faculty** (24% of all faculty), there are:

- 390** professors
- 100** associate professors
- 91** assistant professors
- 29** instructors
- 25** lecturers
- 3** faculty (unspecified rank)

There are 434 tenured full-time faculty (68% of full-time faculty). There are 2,056 part-time faculty (76% of all faculty).

Though the total count of part-time faculty out number full-time faculty by a ratio of 4:1, the number of credit course sections taught by part-time versus full-time faculty in Fall 2021 was roughly equal, with 2,937 sections taught by full-time faculty (49%) and 3,071 sections taught by part-time faculty (51%).

At least 23% of the full-time faculty hold terminal/professional degrees; however, the exact number is not presently known since some faculty have not formally notified HR of their change in status upon completion of a terminal/professional degree after their date of initial hire. HR is working on creating a systematic process for collecting this information.

The job categories, qualifications, roles and responsibilities, and compensation for faculty and academic staff are delineated within collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), along with criteria and procedures for recruitment, appointment, evaluation, promotion, tenure, and grievance resolution. Although the current CBA contracts expired on July 1, 2021, the terms remain in place until

new contracts are agreed upon. Negotiations with the college bargaining units have been underway for several months.

The confluence of the pandemic, enrollment declines, and increased retirements has negatively impacted full- and part-time faculty numbers, with respective decreases of 1.8% and 16.8% since 2019. At the same time, a significant upcoming state retirement benefit change may prompt many retirements of full-time faculty. It is anticipated that close to 30% of faculty and staff may retire at the end of the Spring 2022 semester; however, these retirements may also provide an opportunity to recruit additional diverse candidates when positions are re-filled.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

Academic Structure Development

CT State will incorporate a new academic organization wherein faculty members are organized into college-wide departments/divisions based on disciplines and programs. These departments will become the new college's academic structure in Fall 2023, with faculty being notified

of the unit into which they are being placed in 2022. (See Standard 3 for *Organization & Governance, Special Area #3.*)

Equity Focus

As an emerging issue, CT State is committed to promoting access, addressing equity issues, and using equity as a lens when examining policies, budget priorities, and academic programming. Colleges have launched Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Centers to provide support and resources to students and faculty as part of their Achieving the Dream efforts (see Appendix AA). The focus on equity is highlighted in recent policy changes and initiatives, such as enhanced efforts at faculty/staff diversification and inclusion. As of December 2021, all bargaining unit employees across the 12 colleges were 60% female, 39% male, 1% unknown gender, 72% white, 9.5% Black, 6.3% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian, and 8.6% other or unspecified.

CT State Leadership consulted with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to benchmark with comparable colleges to ensure the staffing needs of CT State would be met. Although significant hiring is underway to substantially increase the number of professional academic advisors at the community colleges to fully implement the Guided Pathways Holistic Case Management Advising model (see Standard 5 and Appendix AU), the plan is to review the faculty and academic staff needs to meet current enrollment. HR also follows detailed Equal Employment Opportunity compliance standards when reviewing applicants and interviewing candidates for full- and part-time positions, with the overall goal being for CT State to increase diversity to reflect the composition of the student body. In addition, CT State will continue to concentrate on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion under the direction of a new interim Vice President for DEI.

Teaching and Learning Enhancement

To promote high-quality instruction and to support scholarship, research, and creative activities, faculty are encouraged to participate in professional development activities. CT State has hired an Associate Vice President of Teaching & Learning and an interim Director of Professional Development. The duties of these new positions include faculty and staff development opportunities and coordination with other teaching and learning initiatives and activities.

In September 2020, The AVP of Teaching and Learning reconstituted the Teaching and Learning Council (TLC) across the 12 colleges. The TLC meets monthly to

discuss ideas and goals, determine possible roadblocks to proposed actions, and use networks to allay concerns and criticisms at local colleges. Together, the group has composed a tactical plan for the CT State Teaching and Learning division outlining the mission, direction, and strategic goals for the next three academic years. These goals include supporting and enhancing online learning; prioritizing equity, access, and excellence; strengthening communication and collaboration; and providing for leadership opportunities and professional growth.

In response to the pandemic, representatives from the TLC and the CT State Educational Technology Council redesigned an existing online professional development and faculty peer mentoring resource (iTeach) to ensure robust proficiency standards for remote teaching as well as consistency and continued academic excellence in students' learning experiences regardless of delivery method.

With a forward-thinking focus on professional development, CT State has also created and launched new opportunities such as the CT State Leadership Academy for cohorts of faculty and staff in Fall 2021 and Spring 2021; the upcoming CT State Faculty and Staff Online Institute (scheduled for a January 2022 opening); and a new professional learning organization called the Center for Academic Support Excellence (CASE) that was launched in Fall 2021 to support and address specific needs of staff in areas such as tutoring, education technology, accessibility and disability services, library services, and advising.

In order to help ensure students are able to use the various technology tools and platforms that support instruction, an "Essential Blackboard Skills for Students" tutorial module is available to all students across the 12 colleges inside the Blackboard LMS platform. Furthermore, colleges also offer individual and group workshops and tutoring sessions (both in-person and remote) through their tutoring centers.

Actions to Be Completed by July 2023

Academic Structure Transition

During Spring 2022, internal searches will be launched to hire six Academic Deans to oversee the six broad academic program areas. Once hired, these individuals will assist in the hiring of 18 Associate Academic Deans and two Assistant Academic Deans (in English and Math) who will manage the 18 statewide academic departments of CT State. The current community college organizational structure for faculty will gradually transition to CT State in 2022-2023, with periodic statewide department meetings

convening in Fall/Spring 2022 in tandem with existing college departmental meeting structures throughout the academic year. One of the first activities that faculty will engage in within the new departmental structure for CT State will be the election of faculty representatives for the new CT State governance bodies that will begin operating by the end of Fall 2022.

Academic Advising Enhancement

With advising as a key to student success, CT State has started implementing a new Guided Pathways advising model to complement advising that will continue to be conducted by faculty members within specific academic program areas and courses. (See Standard 5).

Faculty Handbook Development

A small workgroup is developing the CT State Faculty handbook by reviewing existing handbooks of the 12 colleges and aligning all policies (see Standard 4). The new handbook will be available to distribute to all faculty in Fall 2022 and will help provide guidance for continual enhancement of teaching, learning, and scholarship, including expectations of faculty, academic policies and procedures, and information related to instructional resources and services.

Actions Planned After July 2023

Academic Structure Finalization

During the transition of the academic organizational structure from 12 colleges to the statewide structure of CT State, and as the new organizational structure is implemented, analyses will be completed to ensure academic staffing is at a sufficient level to support students, faculty, and staff, and to confirm alignment of staffing with CT State's mission and goals.

Online Learning and Digital Accessibility

Students in CT State online courses/programs will have the same opportunities as on-ground students to access student and academic services in an online/virtual format. Likewise, all student services will continue to be available to all students, regardless of whether they are online or on campus. Library services, tutoring, disability services, etc. will remain fully accessible to all students and services will be regularly reviewed to ensure continued accessibility of all services. Assessment of students in online programs and student evaluations of online courses/programs will be equivalent to their on-ground counterparts.

Conclusion

With approximately 60 years of experience, the existing 12 colleges have an established history of maintaining high standards and conforming to NECHE principles and practices for teaching and learning that will be continued with CT State. Overall, CT State takes great pride in its full- and part-time faculty and academic staff, who are dedicated, hard-working, and actively implementing practices to improve student success. Simultaneously, many faculty and staff members are participating in work groups and committees to bring about a smooth transition to CT State and it is anticipated that continued efforts and initiatives will encourage even broader participation (see Standards 3 and 4).

STANDARD SEVEN: Institutional Resources

The 12 community colleges have been plagued by fiscal instability as revenues have not kept pace with expenditures. The colleges have high fixed costs, with significant duplication across the 12 institutions. Enrollments have been declining and the BOR cannot increase tuition enough to offset shortfalls without sacrificing affordability and the colleges’ commitment to access and equity. The pandemic has exacerbated these trends and tuition has decreased from 41% of revenue in FY 18 to 28% of revenue in FY 22.

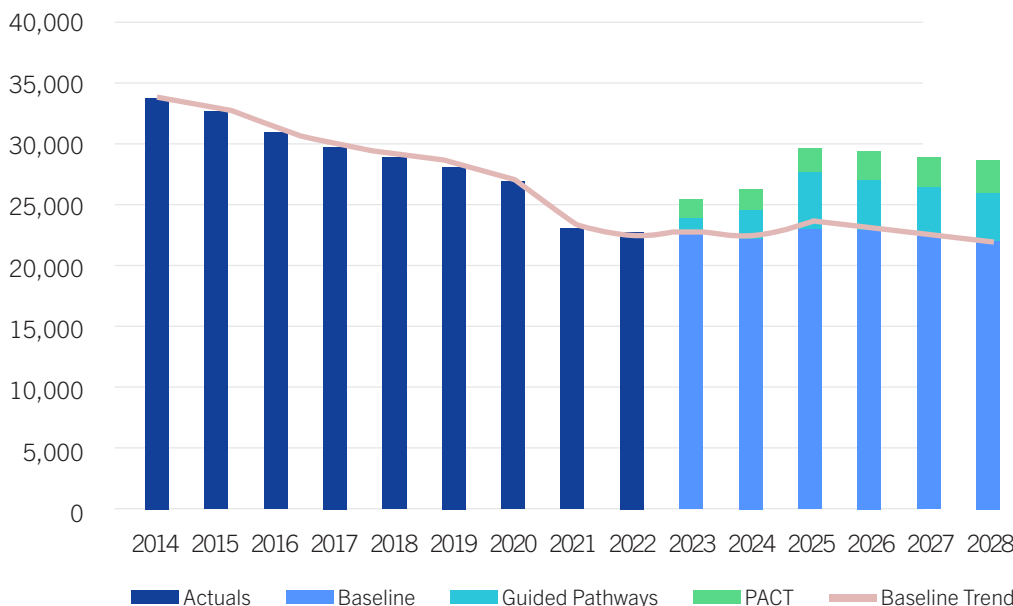
5-YEAR REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE REVENUE	FY 18 ACTUAL	FY 19 ACTUAL	FY 20 ACTUAL	FY 21 ACTUAL	FY 22 BUDGET
State Appropriations	59%	61%	63%	64%	63%
Tuition & All Other (Gross)	41%	39%	37%	30%	28%
Federal Covid Aid: HEERF and CRF	0%	0%	0%	6%	9%
ALL REVENUE	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While the influx of federal pandemic aid provides temporary relief, it does not fundamentally change long-term fiscal stability, as two of the 12 colleges (Capital and Gateway) have negative reserves and face long-term insolvency. Closing colleges is not an option and it is only through the collective power of the colleges with system-level reserves and a shared operating fund that the

colleges have the cash and budget flexibility necessary to meet the accreditation standards.

Despite a negative baseline enrollment forecast, the formation of CT State improves revenue and yields long-term growth by investing in best practices to increase the success and retention of current students (see Appendix AV).

CT Community College Enrollment Forecast FTE



It has been challenging to allocate resources towards the creation of CT State while ensuring the 12 colleges have adequate resources and autonomy to meet accreditation standards. While this balance results in some cost duplication during the transition, these upfront costs are strategic investments to put CT State on the path to success and these costs will diminish over time. An effort to reduce resources for CT State during transition, to provide short-term budget relief would neither resolve immediate fiscal problems, nor provide a path to eventual fiscal recovery.

The transition to financial sustainability is underway. These actions focus CT State's efforts on improving student success and reducing non-student-facing costs by eliminating duplication, aligning staff with organizational needs, and achieving economies of scale.

Response to the Commission's Concerns

Institutional Resources (Special Attention Area #9)

Commitment to Providing an Affordable and Quality Education for Students

Despite the pandemic and fiscal challenges, CSCU and the 12 colleges have sustained their commitment to educational quality; demonstrated the ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances; and advanced the BOR's mission, vision, and goals for CSCU. In line with the CT State mission of affordable and accessible education, the BOR sets tuition rates and adopts policies and processes to equitably allocate state funding. The dedication to quality is evidenced by the consistent percentage of financial resources (60.8% to 62.8% of expenditures) allocated to instruction and academic support from FY 18 to FY 21 (see Appendix AW). Also, PACT (Pledge to Advance Connecticut)—a last-dollar, debt-free student financial aid program—was enacted by the CT legislature and approved by the BOR in December 2019 (see Standard 5). The strategic use of institutional HEERF (see Appendix AX) and state-administered federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds has also allowed the colleges to serve current students and support established BOR and CT State priorities. Funds were allocated towards lost revenue, student debt forgiveness, student mental health support, implementation of Guided Pathways (GP) advising, faculty online-pedagogy training, and equipment and technology updates. Through prudent fiscal management and by strategically using HEERF funds, the FY 21 unrestricted net position is \$55 million, up from \$13.3 million

in FY 14. A more detailed analysis of the fiscal health of the colleges, using a composite financial index is available (see Appendix AY),

Budget Development and Review

During the transition to CT State, a new budget process will be developed to ensure that funding aligns with the College's strategic goals. The process will include leadership of the three Regional Presidents and engagement of the 12 campus CEOs and other stakeholders. CT State has also contracted with accounting firm Grant Thornton to engage in a cost and revenue analysis of credit and non-credit academic programs. The review is evaluating program financial contributions and determine a standard for future financial decisions.

Contingency planning is integrated with budget implementation and aligned with BOR priorities and strategic plans. The 12 colleges currently handle disaster and business continuity planning, but the new CT State Technology Service Organization will develop and manage a single disaster and business continuity plan to cover all campuses in CT State.

CSCU system finances are reviewed by two standing BOR committees, which regularly report to the BOR for review and approval of key decisions. The Finance and Infrastructure Committee (F&IC) has general responsibility for financial oversight, and the Audit Committee monitors the adequacy and integrity of internal controls such as financial and ethics reporting, legal and regulatory requirements and compliance, and risk assessment. Fiscal policies are posted on the CSCU website and financial procedures are available on the CSCU intranet.

Management provides mid-year and next-year spending plans and frequent budget forecasts to the BOR and its committees. Although these are not always multi-year forecasts, management has provided comprehensive projections on the consolidation and routinely evaluates the accuracy of the budget calculations and refines the estimates as needed (see Appendix AZ).

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

Key Implementation of Shared Services

The CT State organizational structure centralizes many back office and processing functions to allow staff to have more time for direct student contact. This reorganization has been accomplished by implementing shared services. The shared-service model, which provides both short- and

long-term advantages, has been endorsed by the BOR (see Appendix BA). The model facilitates the transition to CT State while preserving the autonomy of the 12 colleges in the short-term, and it also standardizes services while achieving economies of scale in the long-term. Through this structure, CT State employees will continue to provide these important services, just in a new, more consistent way. Service-level agreements and/or governance committees are in place for these shared services and each college pays for services provided by central units. The varied approach to shared services reflects the history of how these functions have been provided and the unique nature of each service as shown in the table below. Duties and responsibilities of the college and service provider are outlined as well as fiscal responsibilities. Processes and procedures for accountability such as performance measures, periodic reviews, mandated response times, and/or dispute resolution provisions are also established (see Appendix BB).

Shared-Services Advantages, Challenges, and Plans for Improvement

Implementing shared services also allows staff to focus on specific functions that require greater specialization. This model allows staff to gain advanced skills and expertise and it improves outcomes and enhances compliance with state and federal law. Further, the implementation has promoted standard and consistent processes for assess-

ment and continuous improvement in these service areas and has set the foundation for operational excellence in CT State.

Even minor changes are disruptive and implementing shared services during a pandemic, with many staff working remotely, has been a difficult task. Consequently, there have been challenges during implementation. The transition to a larger, more complex structure has required a culture shift and the documentation of processes and standardization of communication continues to be an organizational challenge. Though there have been some challenges in implementing shared services, President Cheng is dedicated to the success and efficacy of this model and is committed to adding more resources as needed. The CT State leadership team is also focused on establishing a plan for more thorough and structured professional development to support faculty, staff, and administrators in navigating these new norms.

HR Shared-Services Reorganization

The HR shared-services model was instituted at the 12 colleges and Charter Oak State College in Fall 2020. HR has been reorganized into a Center of Excellence (COE) model that standardizes and streamlines HR policies, procedures, and functions and provides centralized access to services. Performance evaluations are conducted in accordance with CBA schedules and supervisors are notified

HISTORY & FUTURE OF SHARED SERVICE	ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT & STUDENT AFFAIRS	HUMAN RESOURCES	FINANCE	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Will shared service exist once CT State is operational?	No. This is a transitional arrangement.	Yes	Yes	Yes
OVERVIEW OF SHARED SERVICE	ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT & STUDENT AFFAIRS	HUMAN RESOURCES	FINANCE	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Scope of Current Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions • Advising • Financial Aid • Registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity & Inclusion • HR Strategy • Labor Relations • Recruitment & Talent • Compensation, Benefits & HR Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Purchasing/Accounts Payable • Payroll 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Communications • Information Security • Infrastructure • Teaching & Learning
Scope of Future Additional Services	Same	Same	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed Assets • Accounts Receivable • Travel & Reimbursement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktop & Mobile Computing
Number of Employees providing service in FY 22	319	40	53	57

of contractual guidelines. HR policies and procedures are consistently applied, and policies are easily accessible to all employees through distributions and online trainings.

New Partnerships and Funding Opportunities

CSCU and CT State maintain long-term financial projections that are used to establish strategies and budgets. The merger and significant enrollment declines during the pandemic have prompted ongoing reevaluation of these plans and projections. CSCU and CT State are in the process of reducing expenses while increasing revenues by enhancing student retention and pursuing additional funding sources. New partnerships and funding opportunities are evaluated by the BOR and its committees and the recent CSCU Establishment of Centers and Institutes Policy (2020) indicates that justifications for new units must include a section on budget and sustainability (Appendix BC).

Some examples of opportunities include national partnerships for workforce development training that were established with Amazon Web Services and Google, and grant funding that was secured for accelerated short-term healthcare workforce training to meet COVID-driven demands. The Regional Presidents and campus CEOs/Presidents work closely with their foundations to advocate with donors about the needs of the campuses and most importantly the students. Individual college foundations also provide support for these initiatives through student financial aid and scholarships and fundraising for program enhancements such as tutoring and technology.

Information Technology (IT)

IT staffing levels have compressed due to attrition, but advanced service-support approaches have compensated for the loss and the 12 colleges' academic and administrative technology needs are being met. The capacity is sustainable at current levels; however, if IT staff attrition continues without replacement, service-request needs for CT State will ultimately outstrip the capacity. To counter the impacts of additional attrition, IT is partnering with Teaching and Learning PD staff to increase faculty and staff technology skills so that IT can focus service resources on supporting student needs. Another planned strategy is to identify students and interns, nurture their talent, and provide career advancement paths upon graduation.

CSCU, CT State, and college IT staff each have roles and responsibilities within the IT ServiceNow ticketing system to facilitate efficient and effective workflow, resource utilization, and quality to meet educational program needs and support institutional improvement. IT lead-

ership at the 12 colleges conduct monthly analyses of technology service tickets to evaluate requests, support staff responses, decrease response times, and improve resolution outcomes to ensure IT resource capacity meets service demands and to identify areas for improvement. Network infrastructure upgrades have also been completed to provide redundant 10 gigabyte connectivity to meet technology demands and to shift operations as needed with minimal disruption. These upgrades include Wi-Fi connectivity; movement to cloud-based programs; scalable pay-for-use services, and Office365 Enterprise, which offers integrated data security, embedded update cadence, and access anywhere from any device. To date, Office365 has had a 99.9% uptime. CSCU and CT State plan to offer 5G service within two years. Work is also underway to implement a new, single instance of Ellucian Banner; to develop a single catalog; and to create a new website for CT State (see Standards 4, 5 and 9).

Technology Steering Committee

The CT State Technology Steering Committee is the governance body responsible for aligning technology resources with CT State strategic goals. The committee will be charged with prioritizing organizational projects and advocating and securing resource support and funding for cross-functional departments. CSCU and CT State will determine whether a sustainable financial framework is in place to maintain sufficient information-technology staffing and equipment resources. During the shared-services reorganization, skills assessments will continue to be undertaken to determine training needs and to ensure that CT State employs qualified personnel to fulfill the College's mission (see Standard 2).

Physical and Technological Resources

Health, safety, and welfare of the students is paramount and annual facility evaluations are conducted at each college. These evaluations proactively identify safety concerns and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and the CT fire code. Prioritized action plans are created and instituted to quickly correct any noted deficiencies. CSCU has a long-term commitment to proactively seek funding for facilities updates. Facilities master plans are periodically completed for the 12 colleges, and these allow for analysis of current and projected needs (see Standard 2). The colleges also develop capital budgets in concert with comprehensive master plans and these are revised as circumstances change (see Standard 2). Each of the existing satellite campuses will continue to operate and be funded as part of the legacy parent-campus in CT State—for

example Danbury campus-Naugatuck Valley and Meriden campus-Middlesex. As CT State matures, these campuses will be regularly reviewed to ensure equitable assignment of resources and services.

Library Services

For institutional benchmarking, peer analysis, and evaluation of 21st century trends, the 12 college libraries participate in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) surveys to collect and analyze data. The interim CT State Library Director provides vision, leadership, and advocacy through active engagement with the leadership of the 12 college libraries. The directors are compiling information and working on a strategy and target date for CT State library e-resource changes. To fulfill research and public service requests in alignment with the CT State mission, the libraries need to remain responsive to student/faculty curriculum needs and be actively involved in the curriculum process.

Actions to Be Completed Prior to July 2023

The CT State leadership team and staff will be centrally located at 185 Main Street, New Britain, CT by March of 2022. Planning is underway for renovations at the colleges to accommodate the shared-services teams and new GP advisors.

Conclusion

Maintaining the status quo of 12 separate colleges with high overhead costs and poor completion, retention, and success rates is financially unsustainable. Whereas the level of state support has increased, it has not kept pace with operating costs. Compounding these fiscal challenges, the number of public high school graduates has been declining. These fast-changing, uncertain circumstances necessitate the shared resources and realignment of staff with organizational needs that the single, merged college offers.

The plan for the merger focuses on maximizing scarce resources and deepening investments in student-facing positions to increase student success and address equity gaps. CT State will be in a better position to advance student success and equity by maximizing investments in best practices and ensuring consistency of student experience regardless of campus. Financial stability will allow for investment in systemic reforms to address the most pressing challenges related to student success and outcomes, especially for our Black and Hispanic students.

STANDARD EIGHT: Educational Effectiveness

Historically, the 12 community colleges have developed processes for assessing institutional and educational effectiveness that aligned with their missions, modes of instruction, and student characteristics. Assessment techniques incorporate student retention and persistence rates, graduation metrics, key performance indicators (KPIs), student learning outcomes (SLOs), and end-semester student course ratings/evaluations. Colleges have assessed effectiveness, analyzed gaps and disparities, and made informed strategic decisions based on the assessment results. However, as separate institutions there are variations in definitions, practices, and processes among the colleges that make comparative analysis difficult. With these differences, there have been challenges coming to an agreement on common assignments, rubrics, and course evaluations as well as procedures to collect and analyze assessment data. There have also been discussions about the balance between instructor flexibility and the fidelity of outcome measures. Through the methods described in the sections below, CT State will facilitate a coordinated approach to the use of gathering, assessing, and evaluating SLOs.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

Student-Success KPIs Published and Analyzed

Emphasizing thorough assessment, data-driven decision-making, and continuous quality improvement, CSCU provides a five-year GP KPI dashboard that is shared widely and publicly accessible [online](#) as well as a summary report of the findings (see Appendix BD). First-time student cohorts at the 12 colleges are evaluated annually based on the KPIs. The data dashboard allows for disaggregation by college, region, semester, full-/part-time status, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and zip code. As a system, this KPI work has been reinforced with national

benchmarking through the 12 colleges' association with ATD (see Standard 2). Through disaggregation of student-success rates, the community colleges have been able to identify the student groups most in need of support and direct enhanced outreach efforts, resources, and services to these students.

Overall, though, both enrollment and the student-success measures at the 12 colleges have been decreasing. Fall enrollment at the 12 colleges was 50,548 in Fall 2016; 45,148 in Fall 2019; and 38,869 in Fall 2020—this represents a five-year drop of 23% (see Appendix BE). From the end of the AY 2016 to 2020, the three-year graduation rate stayed stable at 16%, the three-year transfer rate

From 2013 to 2020, the KPIs have persistently demonstrated unsatisfactory levels of achievement

for all students and particularly for students of color. A review of disaggregated data through a DEI lens has identified significant gaps in Black and Hispanic student-learning outcomes. For example, only 20-23% of first-year community college students passed both college-level math and English, and only 34-37% earned 15 or more college-level credits. Equally disturbing, the percentage of white students that completed 24 or more credits after one year is approximately double the percentage of Hispanic students and three times the percentage of Black/African American students, and this has remained relatively constant over the eight years of the dataset (2013-2020) (see Appendix BE). Also, in 2020, the first-time, full-time, Fall-to-Fall retention at the 12 colleges was 53% (a 5% drop compared to 2019) and the graduation, transfer, and enrollment (students still enrolled) rates were 16%, 17%, and 21%, respectively, for an overall 53% success rate (combined sum of three rates based on raw data).

dropped overall by four percentage points (21% in 2016, 18% in 2019, and 17% in 2020), and the Fall-to-Fall retention decreased overall by five percentage points (58% in 2016, 58% in 2019, and 53% in 2020 (see Appendix BE). Although the pandemic influenced the 2020 values, the consistently low success measures over time make clear that despite the efforts of the individual colleges, students are not succeeding in these key metrics. These results signify the need for a large-scale, concerted, and systemic effort to improve student success at all colleges and this is a central priority at the heart of the merger proposal. As a single College, centralized resources can be devoted to creating the change needed to improve student success. Through these efforts, research suggests that CT State will be better able to make a meaningful improvement in student-success performance metrics over time.

General Education Outcomes and Evaluation

A long-standing faculty curriculum governance body known as the Framework Implementation and Review Committee (FIRC) convened more than 70 faculty from across the system in February 2020. The group worked together to develop common SLOs within the general education framework. These draft SLOs were approved by FIRC in Spring 2021 (see Appendix BF) and sent out for system-wide feedback. Since then, the group has incorporated edits based upon the feedback, and the draft SLOs will be sent out for endorsement this semester. For the evaluation of general education learning outcomes, some colleges have created well-organized assessment systems with standardized rubrics, common assignments, and digital assessment platforms to collect, analyze, and archive data.

Academic Program Review

Similarly, the colleges maintain cycles of rigorous academic program review (APR), a process mandated by the BOR to assess program quality and effectiveness and provide information for the continuous quality improvement of teaching and learning. The BOR requires that each degree and certificate granting program is subject to review at least once every seven years. Unfortunately, there is not a consistent APR cycle, procedure, or template that is used across all colleges; therefore, the formation of CT State will provide an opportunity to establish a uniform APR cycle and a standardized self-study reporting template and procedure. A timeline for developing the CT State APR reporting template and implementing the APR cycles and procedures is included in Appendix BG. CT State is also establishing an academic program cost vs. revenue system that is being provided by Grant Thornton. This will provide

a consistent cost-accounting method for existing and proposed academic programs that will allow the college to better understand program cost and affordability.

Assessment Advisory Committee

To guide the process of examining current assessment systems, identifying exemplary models, and standardizing SLO assessment and APR for CT State, an Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC) was formed in Spring 2021. The AAC is chaired by the CT State Director of Program Review and Assessment and includes five faculty members (representing five of the 12 colleges) and the three CT State Regional IR Directors. The AAC has been charged with overseeing all faculty-led assessment of academic programs and courses within CT State in collaboration with the curriculum governance bodies and statewide academic departments that will be in place in Fall 2023 (see Appendix BH).

Surveys on Student Satisfaction

To gain a broader perspective, the colleges measure student satisfaction based upon students' perceptions of institutional and academic experiences. All colleges use standardized, nationally normed instruments such as the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses based on students' perceptions and levels of engagement.

The 2021 CCSSE results for the 12 colleges revealed that:

- none of the categories scored above the mean;
- the categories of “student effort,” “academic challenge,” “student-faculty interaction,” and “support for learners” scored just below the national mean; and
- the category of “active and collaborative learning” scored the lowest and was quite a bit below the mean (see Appendix BI).

In the 2019 SENSE survey, the 12 colleges demonstrated:

- the highest score above the national mean in the “effective track to college readiness” category;
- scores at or just above the national mean for the categories of “high expectations and aspirations” and “academic and social support network;” and
- scores just below the national mean for the categories of “early connections,” “clear academic plan and pathway,” and “engaged in learning” (see Appendix BJ).

These findings reiterate that the community college

students in CT are not succeeding in key, national metrics and this highlights the urgency for CT State to collectively work towards improving student success.

In addition to the national surveys, the Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA) division of CT State also developed its annual survey of student satisfaction, the Survey Assessing Student Satisfaction (see Appendix BK), which augments the CCSSE survey and includes qualitative and quantitative input. The survey results—which provide details on admission and orientation processes, academic and career planning, academic and social-support systems, time management, and academic challenges—are used in developing and revising the EMSA performance indicators and benchmarks.

Actions to Be Completed Prior to July 2023

Assessment Advisory Committee Next Steps

Over the next year, the AAC will collaborate with key stakeholders to engage in on-going research and review internal and external best practices in program review and assessment. The AAC will also review multi-step assessment processes that involve establishing targeted SLOs, mapping outcomes to curriculum, choosing assessment measures, collecting and analyzing data, and making data-informed program-improvement decisions. To foster the culture of assessment, the AAC will create forms and develop policies and procedures to support consistent and coherent data collection, analysis, and reporting on academic and non-academic student-success data, SLOs, and program effectiveness. Student-success measures will involve multiple data sources (including KPIs, retention, persistence, transfer, and completion along with post-graduation outcomes such as loan default/repayment rates, licensure/credentialing results, and employment statistics) as well as various methods of inquiry such as direct and indirect measures, quantitative and qualitative methods, and internal and external reviews.

The AAC will also create a systemwide community of practice to discuss best practices in program review and SLO assessment, especially regarding belonging and DEI. The community of practice format offers opportunities for mentorship, ongoing training and consultation, model-assessment tools, clarification of guidelines and procedures, access to research, and an open forum to discuss questions or concerns. An additional goal of the AAC is to adopt a digital platform for assessment data collection and analysis that will allow faculty to upload student-learning artifacts in identified outcomes for subsequent review by appropriate disciplinary faculty groups.

Actions Planned After July 2023

Future Steps to Advance Assessment

To continue to foster a culture of assessment and continuous quality improvement, CT State will work in partnership with all stakeholders to implement a uniform and comprehensive system to collect and analyze educational-effectiveness metrics. The goal is to expand the AAC membership to include at least one representative from every college by Fall 2023. CT State will also offer robust, professional curriculum development and assessment learning opportunities for faculty and staff. The development of these initiatives will involve many stakeholders including faculty, staff, the AAC, IR, the CT State Director of Program Review and Assessment, and the CT State Director of Professional Development, as well as the CT State AVPs of Academic Programs and Curriculum, Institutional Assessment and Planning, and Teaching and Learning. The plan is for all forms of SLO assessment to be campus-based with system-wide reporting requirements. For general education and some forms of co-curricular assessment, the goal is to have a standard set of norms and practices that apply to all campuses by the end of Spring 2024. This will include a common set of SLOs, assignments, and rubrics, which will assure comparable, aggregated data collection from all campuses that can be uploaded to a systemwide platform so that CT State can generate a unified SLO report for the entire College.

Conclusion

CT State is building an institution where assessment is valued at all levels of the organization from front-line faculty and staff to the President's Cabinet. The establishment of goals aligned with the College's mission permits a shared sense of purpose and direction. Faculty and staff across the colleges are highly skilled in systematically conducting SLO assessment, academic program review, data collection, and analysis, and using the results to measure student success and support planning for the future. Likewise, many programs with specialized accreditation also provide exemplary, scalable systems for continuous improvement. CT State's leadership team is committed to leveraging current expertise and best practices as models for all campuses in the future. CT State will focus on measuring and comparing performance outcomes to goals in order to identify gaps and drive new strategies and tactics for improvement. Ultimately, these efforts will allow CT State to improve the capacity for data collection and analysis and build a culture of assessment, continuous improvement, and data-driven decision-making.

STANDARD NINE: Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

The CSCU system, which includes the existing colleges and the future CT State, is governed by the BOR and incorporates the [BOR bylaws](#). These bylaws define authority, membership, code of conduct, meetings, officers' duties, committees, and maintenance. The systemwide Faculty Advisory Committee ([FAC](#)), which includes faculty and professional staff, and Student Advisory Committee (SAC) are charged with providing information and advice to the BOR and legislative committees based on faculty, staff, and student perspectives.

Currently, the colleges operate as autonomous, independently accredited institutions with faculty, staff, student representative groups, and bylaws for organizational policies that offer freedom of expression related to academic and administrative matters. Full- and part-time non-managerial employees have union representation with contractual language for academic freedom and grievance procedures. Students can file grievances regarding academic and non-academic issues through processes detailed on the colleges' websites and in the Student Handbooks and Catalogs. In CT State, there will continue to be representative groups for faculty, staff, and students; collective bargaining agreements; contract language for academic freedom and faculty/staff grievance procedures; and processes for student grievances.

Actions Accomplished Related to the Standard

Communication

From the outset, CSCU and CT State leadership have been committed to operating with both internal and external stakeholders in an open and transparent manner. BOR and leadership meeting agendas are disseminated in advance by email, the meetings are livestreamed, and the [minutes](#) and [recordings](#) are publicly available on the CSCU website. These meetings regularly include progress updates along with presentations on finances, shared services, and academic and student-affairs matters (see Appendix BL). Many of the meetings also provide opportunities for public comments from faculty, staff, students, or other stakeholders; faculty and staff presentations;

question-and-answer sessions; and discussions about report and proposal revisions. As plans for CT State have evolved, there has been regular and consistent system-wide communication by email (see Appendix BM). CSCU also created a [website](#) that provides a wealth of information related to the plans to merge the 12 colleges, including the CT State mission and vision, alignment updates, and accreditation documents. A second website focused on the academic transition (e.g., academic organizational charts, academic implementation timelines, new academic positions, and FAQs) is being developed for launch by the end of Spring 2022. Details on the charges, leads, and membership lists of the [Guided Pathways](#) and [consolidation](#) working groups are also posted. For enhanced transparency, the community college financial statement, procurement manual, budget and actual results, audit, and expenditures are available [online](#). Additionally, the [KPI data](#) are publicly available on the CSCU website.

To improve communication, the CT State leadership team has conducted college and regional town hall meetings as well as departmental meetings to gather feedback and answer questions about the merger. The leadership team has presented and answered questions at both the FAC and SAC meetings, and they have updated legislators in public forums on the merger plans, projections, and financials. Students have been kept apprised of CT State progress through the SAC meetings and language about the merger has been printed in all 12 college catalogs since AY 2020-21 and in all new student applications since the start of AY 2021-22. CSCU President Terrence Cheng visited each of the community colleges in Fall 2021 (see Appendix BN) and held sessions with students, faculty, staff, leadership, and foundations. During these forums,

President Cheng provided detailed budget and enrollment updates and discussed system-wide strengths and challenges. The forums also included the opportunity for open question-and-answer sessions, which promoted candid communication about concerns related to the merger.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Equal Employment Opportunities

BOR, CSCU, and CT State leaders demonstrate their commitment to legal and ethical behavior through professional and personal actions, fair and honest decision-making, and consistent actions based on integrity and accountability. BOR, CSCU, and CT State are dedicated to DEI and this resolve is shown through non-discriminatory policies and practices in place at the community colleges; mandated Code of Conduct trainings for all employees; and focused systemwide efforts to improve DEI through the strengthened Equity Council, the creation of a CT State Office of DEI, and the appointment of an interim CT State Vice President of DEI. The CSCU HR Equal Employment Opportunity Center of Excellence, which is a shared service in place across the 12 colleges, oversees compliance with employment affirmative action and enrollment policies for under-represented minorities across the colleges. Affirmative Action Plans from the 12 colleges are sent to the Connecticut’s Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) on behalf of each region and are available [online](#). BOR policies that address integrity and transparency (for example, ethics, student and employee conduct, academic program proposal process, student learning assessment, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Title IX, financial aid, and refunds) will continue to exist in CT State with consistent implementation across all campuses.

CT State Website Planning

The CT State website project was launched in 2018 under a GP subcommittee, Website and Streamlined Application (WASA), which included representatives from areas such as academic affairs, admissions, communications, faculty, financial aid, and IT (see Appendix BO). The group was tasked with reviewing and assessing technology, marketing, and recruitment tools as well as evaluating strategies to integrate key elements of student inquiry, application, enrollment, and onboarding processes into a single website design. WASA designed a CT State website framework and developed a streamlined site map focused on facilitating onboarding, accessibility, and traceability for multiple internal and external audiences. The website outline includes the four key areas highlighted in the table below.

Onboarding Guides	Assist prospective students and answer common concerns
Support Access	Support all students and demonstrate consumer focus
Audience Landing Pages	Improve communication and provide comprehensive services
Campus Filterable Content	Allow content viewing specific to a campus location

Until the launch of the CT State website, the community colleges will continue to ensure readily accessible and accurate public college communications. This includes print and web-based versions of the current catalogs, access to archived catalogs, up-to-date digital and printed college information, programmatic and institutional evidence of student learning, details on college events and system-wide initiatives, U.S. Department of Education’s required consumer information, and prominent student and faculty success information. The colleges are in different stages of the process, but they are also working on posting applicable professional licensure agreements and National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity (NC-SARA) disclosures on their websites, as applicable (currently 11 of the colleges are NC-SARA institutions). There is a centralized webpage for the system’s participating NC-SARA colleges to direct students who have any NC-SARA-related complaints. Staff within CT State Academic Operations will oversee and coordinate all online programs to ensure compliance with NC-SARA and NECHE policies and to ensure that online programs are distributed statewide in a coordinated manner.

Actions to Be Completed Prior to July 2023

Logo

The plan to unveil and integrate the new CT State logo will be finalized in early Spring 2022 and expansion of internal and external communication will continue during Spring and Summer 2022. CT State is building a staff dedicated to promoting communications, and multiple personnel searches are anticipated to be complete by Spring/Summer 2022 (e.g., a Web Services Specialist and Regional Marketing Directors). Pending the final decision on the substantive change application, the kickoff for the CT State logo is planned for late Spring 2022. At that point, the goal will be to strongly focus efforts on rebranding the system and colleges in time for accepting the first student applications for CT State in October 2022.

CT State Website

The team charged with completing the CT State website includes the CT State Director of Communications & Strategic Marketing (appointed September 2021); the CSCU Web Communications & Design Coordinator; and a CEO, Marketing Director, and Web Designer & Developer from the community colleges. Fastspot has been selected as the vendor for the CT State website build, and a contract was signed in October 2021. The new *ctstate.edu* website will include easy access to all CT State information including the application, academic programs, registration, and financial aid services. The website is anticipated to be live by July 2022, although the progress and timing may be impacted by the development and interface with third-party programs such as DIGARC Acalog and Ellucian Banner, Degree Works, and CRM Recruit. Once the CT State website is live, some of the 12 colleges' pages will slowly link over to high-level sections and work will continue to move any remaining content to the new site. As consolidation processes are finalized, CT State will incorporate academic and departmental information into the new site and eventually full campus URLs (uniform resource locators) will be redirected to the new CT State URL.

Conclusion

Pending approval of the substantive change application, the BOR will provide governing oversight of CT State while maintaining the highest level of integrity and transparency. There are safeguards in place to ensure the College will fully adhere to and exceed the standards in relation to integrity, transparency, and public disclosure. Aligned with the mission, CT State will rely on data for evidence-based planning, evaluation, outcome assessment, resource allocation, policy creation, and decision-making and will regularly review policies to ensure currency. CT State will accept full responsibility for all activities that exist prior to its formation among the existing colleges, bringing them all under the authority of the CT State president. A review will be conducted to determine whether such activities should continue or be eliminated.

As discussed in the communication section above, the CT State leadership team has implemented a multipronged approach to elicit collaboration, respond to concerns, and build a broad-based network of communication. Nevertheless, there are varying opinions on the merger and CT State is aware that intensive negotiation may be needed to assuage lingering doubts, resistance, and fears in order to deal honestly with the ramifications of inaction and find areas of common ground to move forward. Along the way, CT State commits to increased communication; improved

public access to student-learning outcome and success data; enhanced overall data accessibility and usage; and strengthened data integrity, validity, and reliability. CT State will promote more faculty and staff participation in the establishment of student-success metrics and will encourage collaborative and comprehensive approaches to advancing equity and improving student success.

APPENDICES

Substantive Change Request for
Community College Consolidation