



February 15, 2022

New England Commission of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803-4514

Dear NECHE Commissioners:

I am pleased to reiterate the Connecticut Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) support for the restructuring of Connecticut's 12 community colleges into a single institution (CT State Community College) with a single accreditation, and for the adoption of the Guided Pathways student success framework across the 12 CT State campuses.

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system and the state's 12 community colleges are among the best, longest-standing, and most important partners of the five Connecticut regional workforce development boards (WDBs) that comprise the CWDC. The community colleges have long been the WDBs' primary training partner, offering a wide variety of short- and long-term certificates and degree programs that prepare our American Job Center customers for quality jobs while responding to the talent needs of employers across a range of industries. In recent years, this partnership has produced a short-term, employer-designed, demand-driven workforce training model that has earned national recognition for meeting high-volume employer needs and preparing inexperienced workers for quality jobs and serves as the prototype for Connecticut's \$70 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) CareerConneCT program. The WDBs and community colleges have also collaborated on a long list of successful federal grant projects over the past several years.

The CWDC continues to unequivocally support the many goals of the community college merger and Guided Pathways implementation that we described in a letter we sent to NECHE in support of the merger in June 2020. These goals include increasing graduation and completion rates; reducing academic outcome disparities for students from historically underserved populations; increasing resources for addressing barriers to retention, completion, and employment; delivering more demand-driven programming (often through partnerships with the workforce boards); aligning curriculum across campuses and facilitating transfer and articulation; and scaling effective practices across the state.

Fundamentally, the creation of CT State and simultaneous adoption of Guided Pathways – a holistic approach to redesigning the student experience from initial enrollment through the completion of a credential and into employment or further education – will stabilize the colleges' financial outlook while equitably improving student outcomes. Streamlining processes and procedures and centralizing back-office functions will allow resources to be reallocated to provide greater student supports at the campus level.

On behalf of Connecticut's five workforce development boards, the CWDC is pleased to endorse the community college consolidation and the important goals that it promises to achieve for our students, jobseekers, employers, and state economy. We look forward to a strong and productive partnership with CT State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Villano".

Bill Villano
Chair, Connecticut Workforce Development Council