

David L. Levinson, Ph.D.
70 Hawthorne Road
Waltham, MA 02451

February 4, 2022

Dear New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE):

I am writing to support the substantive change proposal submitted by the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) to merge the twelve currently separately accredited institutions into one accredited college – Connecticut State Community College. As the former president of Norwalk Community College, Vice President for Community Colleges, Interim President of Connecticut State, and former NEASC commissioner, I have a unique vantage point for rendering this assessment.

Connecticut's community colleges have never been equitably resourced. Given the existing funding formula, there is little reason as to why particular colleges are allotted certain resources and not others. Moreover, not all colleges have sufficient revenues to cover operating expenses. A majority of our community colleges stand at the precipice of insolvency, unable to comply with existing NECHE standards.

Educational opportunities are similarly inequitably distributed throughout the state. If a student wishes to enroll in courses or programs not offered at their home institution, she will need to go through a burdensome transfer process. A cursory examination of key performance indicators shows a significant racial gap in student achievement.

The creation of Connecticut State Community College promises and has already begun to rectify this situation. Upon admittance, students will have the opportunity to enroll in all programs at any location. Faculty will have unparalleled opportunities for professional development in that they will be grouped with disciplinary colleagues from throughout the state.

Another benefit of the merger will be that resources spent on what is typically viewed as “back-office” processing can be curtailed in favor of more student-facing expenditures. The exponential increase in guided pathway advisors is just one benefit already achieved under Connecticut State's Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA) division. Similarly, under EMSA's tutelage, mental health and other “wrap around” services critical for student success have flourished.

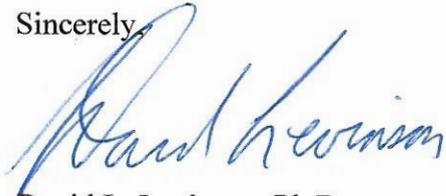
Ironically, the establishment of CT State preceded the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing decline in student enrollment. Enrollment management tools recently implemented will improve student retention and allow for the targeted marketing of degree and certificate programs to underserved populations. CT State's infrastructure will enable a strategic, equitable deployment of resources to provide residents with unprecedented opportunities.

As my colleagues have demonstrated in their substantive change request, CT State has already achieved many of the hallmarks illustrative of a fully accredited institution. Fortunately,

NECHE has guided CT State's progress and will continue to do so as it becomes fully operational in Fall of 2023.

Please contact me if I can provide any additional evidence in support of the proposed substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David L. Levinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

David L. Levinson, Ph.D.

President Emeritus, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)