



April 12, 2023

Dr. John Maduko
President
Connecticut State Community College
61 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105

Mr. Terrence Cheng
President
Connecticut State Colleges & Universities
61 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105

Dear Presidents Maduko and Cheng:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Connecticut State Community College and Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Connecticut State Community College (CT State) and Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System (CSCU) be accepted;

that the report requested for submission by June 1, 2023 for consideration at the Commission's June 2023 retreat be confirmed;

that, as indicated in our letters of March 21, 2022 and October 12, 2022, the June 2023 report include: (1) an update on enrollment and budget projections for CT State, with attention to the institution's success in addressing the operating deficit; (2) an analysis of the impact of anticipated faculty and staff retirements and the institution's plans to ensure it has sufficient appropriately qualified personnel; (3) evidence of CT State's success in achieving the nine sets of items specified on pages 3-5 of the March 21, 2022 letter; (4) an update on progress to accomplish any tasks and goals not completed during the prior time periods; and (5) an update on the institution's consolidation/transition of its data systems and the impact of these consolidations/transitions on the student experience;

that, in responding to the Commission's request to provide updates on tasks and goals not completed during prior time periods, particular attention be given to:

1. completion and approval of the strategic plan;
2. hiring of the sixth academic dean and naming of department chairs by each campus;
3. completing the student handbook and behavioral intervention procedures;
4. continued progress to transfer specialized accreditations, Perkins grant programs, high school partnerships, and dual enrollment programs to CT State;

that CT State submit a report by October 27, 2023 for consideration at the Commission's November 2023 meeting that provides an update on goals and tasks expected to be completed after July 1, 2023;

that the October 27, 2023 report give particular emphasis to the following:

1. continued progress with the Alignment and Completion of Math and English (ACME);
2. completing the faculty handbook;
3. review of college-wide curricular and non-curricular issues by faculty governance committees;
4. continued progress with implementing the One College Banner system;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2025 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Connecticut State Community College and Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System was accepted because it was responsive to the requests made by the Commission in its letters of March 21, 2022 and October 12, 2022.

The Commission commends CT State and CSCU on their preparation of a comprehensive, well-written report that documents the continued progress to consolidate the 12 Connecticut community colleges into Connecticut State Community College. We especially appreciate the "Progress on Tasks" chart provided at the start of the report and encourage continued use of similar charts in subsequent reports to the Commission.

With respect to enrollment and budget, at the time the report was submitted, CT State was projecting an "overall 3% enrollment decline" from Spring 2022 to Spring 2023, a decline that "aligns" with national trends. Although CT State ended FY2022 with a positive balance of \$8.5 million, it has revised its projections for "outyears" to reflect greater deficits due to lower enrollment projections, higher wage increases, and higher inflation rates. We understand College leadership has involved the campuses in developing a "comprehensive deficit mitigation process" to address these anticipated shortfalls and that it also intends to embark on a "significant legislative campaign" for additional state support. Further, the Commission is also gratified to learn that "all of the positions lost to retirement or other attrition have been successfully replaced" and that, while disruptive, the "retirement wave" provided an opportunity for the College to take enrollment changes into consideration when making hiring decisions.

The Commission also takes favorable note of the progress CT State has made on the 20 items specified for attention in the current report, with seven labelled "complete" and the remaining 13 well underway. We are pleased to learn that the governance structure for CT State has been launched and that elections have taken place at all 12 colleges; the Board of Regents has approved five aligned policies, with the remainder scheduled for approval by June 2023; the proposed Annual Program Review (APR) cycle and draft APR FAQ sheet have been completed, and the APR implementation plan is also expected to be done by June 2023; consensus has been achieved on common admissions operating procedures and staff roles, and staff in admissions, financial aid, and student affairs have participated in several professional development opportunities; a single academic catalogue has been developed; and a March 2023 launch of the ctstate.edu website is expected.

We understand that work remaining to be accomplished includes completion and approval of the Strategic Plan for which seven themes have been identified; implementation of the Institutional Effectiveness and Planning structure (delayed to Spring 2023 to “respect the needs of the 12 separately accredited colleges”); continued implementation of the governance structure with both local and statewide governance bodies operational by April/May 2023; “phasing-in” of the Alignment and Completion of Math and English (ACME) on the revised two-three-year timeline adopted to address concerns voiced by faculty and staff; finalizing the student handbook and the faculty handbook; and completing the search for the Academic Dean for the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. We are gratified to learn that the Fall 2023 schedule “build” began on February 6 with plans to make the schedule available to students on March 27, 2023; progress also continues to develop and implement One College Banner. Continuing efforts to rewrite consortial agreements and contractual arrangements and to merge Perkins grant programs, high school partnerships, and dual enrollment programs are also noteworthy.

The progress report also addressed three “themes” from public comments previously submitted to the Commission: a concern about the possible erosion of student support services; issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); and a perceived lack of collaboration and cooperation. We appreciate the thoughtful response provided to each issue and acknowledge the steps being taken by CT State and CSCU to provide assurance about these matters, including the hiring of “approximately 100 additional campus-based advisors;” development of a One Stop Enrollment Services Center; Student Success Summits to explain “shifts” in financial aid processes and to share best practices in student success; appointment of a Vice President of DEI for CT State and the establishment of three “coordinating teams” to address DEI and Title IX; full-day visits to each of the 12 campuses by CT State’s president; in-person and virtual meetings between faculty at each campus and the CT State Academic Deans; and a variety of meetings and webinars along with email and website communications. We note from the report that CT State has implemented “over thirty substantive changes” to its structure based on feedback from constituents and is committed to “listening to all stakeholders, compromising, and implementing changes to create a stronger shared governance structure.”

The Commission confirms the report requested for submission by June 1, 2023 for consideration at the Commission’s June 2023 meeting. We remind you that, as indicated in our letters of March 21, 2022 and October 12, 2022, the February 2023 report is to include updates on enrollment, budget, faculty and staff retirements, and the consolidation/transition of the institution’s data systems, as well as evidence of CT State’s success in achieving the nine sets of items specified on pages 3-5 of the March 21, 2022 letter. The March 21, 2022 letter also notes that the June 2023 report is to provide an update on progress to accomplish the tasks and goals not completed during the prior time period. We ask that the institution’s response to this request give particular attention to the four matters specified on page one of this letter. We are gratified to learn of the progress that has been made to date toward accomplishing these items and understand that, according to the revised timeline included in CT State’s report, each is expected to be completed by the time the June report is submitted. We therefore look forward to learning of the institution’s continued success with these matters in the June 2023 report.

The Commission also asks that Connecticut State Community College submit a progress report by October 27, 2023 for consideration at our November 2023 meeting that provides an update on the four items specified on pages 1-2 of this letter. These are tasks that will not be completed in time to be discussed in the June 2023 report or are matters that will be implemented over a longer time horizon (e.g., ACME; faculty governance). Submission of a progress report for consideration in November 2023 will enable the Commission to continue to assess the institution’s “success in implementing the results of its planning” (2.5) with respect to these matters.

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Finally, the Commission confirms the comprehensive evaluation of Connecticut State Community College scheduled for Fall 2025. We refer you to our letter of March 21, 2022 which specifies matters to be addressed in the self-study prepared for the evaluation.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Connecticut State Community College and Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's and System's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the System's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Ms. JoAnn Ryan. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Russell C. Carey

RCC/jm

cc: Ms. JoAnn Ryan
Dr. William Brown, Gateway Community College
Ms. Michelle Coach, Asnuntuck Community College
Ms. Cheryl DeVonish, Norwalk Community College
Dr. Lisa Dresdner, Naugatuck Valley Community College
Dr. G. Duncan Harris, Capital Community College
Dr. Karen Hynick, Quinebaug Valley Community College
Dr. Mary Ellen Jukoski, Three Rivers Community College
Ms. Kimberly Hogan, Middlesex Community College
Dr. Darryl Reome, Tunxis Community College
Dr. Michael Rooke, Northwestern Connecticut Community College
Dr. Dwayne Smith, Housatonic Community College
Dr. Nicole Esposito, Manchester Community College

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions