

Norwalk Community College Resolution Calling for the Dissolution of the Students First Workgroups and Other Related Entities and the Restructure of System Office and the BOR

CSCU President Mark Ojakian has advised that he and the BOR are moving forward with the consolidation of the twelve community colleges as outlined in the Substantive Change report submitted to NEASC. The NEASC CIHE Commission noted a variety of concerns in its response on April 24, 2018. Considering the punitive comments made by them, by moving forward President Ojakian and the BOR jeopardize the accreditation of the community colleges and the state universities. The NEASC CIHE Commission did not reject this plan but they made abundantly clear their skepticism about its feasibility. By moving forward our students' ability to access financial aid is threatened. Only accredited institutions and institutions that have gone beyond "eligibility" requirements to become "candidates" for accreditation may offer financial aid packages to students. Institutions that have only met "eligibility" requirements may not offer financial aid packages.

Regardless of the above, President Ojakian and the Board of Regents have chosen to continue to move forward with consolidation plans. We have been told that all committees created to address consolidation issues within the "Students First" proposal will continue to meet and move forward regardless of the NEASC response of April 24, 2018.

We know that the "Students First" proposal will save little, if any, money as demonstrated in our research into the supposed cost savings of replacing department chairs with Associate Academic Deans. While the Students First report suggested a savings of \$1.4M, we found that this would in fact cost an additional \$3.9M (see attached memo for documentation).

In addition, The System Office is expensive; its budget has averaged \$35M a year since its inception in 2011 for a grand total of approximately \$245M (a staggering one-quarter of a billion dollars). It also has spent roughly \$10 million on contracts with outside companies because of its lack of expertise in higher education and lack of faith in its own employees. The System Office reaches no students and has no accreditation.

Therefore, Norwalk Community College submits the following resolution regarding the dissolution of all committees and other related entities connected to Students First along with the restructuring of the System Office and the Board of Regents to limit their authority. Faculty, staff and administration of the universities and colleges must be key contributors in the creation of a viable plan to address our fiscal and academic needs that will truly benefit our students, our communities and our institutions:

Whereas President Mark Ojakian's "Students First" plan for the Community College Consolidation has been severely criticized by our accrediting body, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), "Because of the magnitude of the proposed changes, the proposed timeline, and the limited investment in supporting the changes, the Commission is concerned that the potential for a disorderly environment for students is too high for it to approve the proposed Community College of Connecticut as a candidate for accreditation based on this proposal.";

Whereas the NEASC response also expresses specific concern about the ability of faculty to "...act in concert across up to twelve campuses to oversee the quality of the academic program.";

Whereas the NEASC response states "...the proposed institution does not appear to have sufficient support for academic administration to plan, oversee, and evaluate hundreds of academic degree and certificate programs,...";

Whereas President Ojakian and the Board of Regents have chosen to continue to disrespect the academic shared governance process by dictating that the colleges continue work on a common general education core to be complete by April 2019 regardless if this is or is not in the best interest of our students. In addition they have put forward a proposal that will allow the BOR to terminate programs based on arbitrary numbers of graduates rather than on the viability of the program itself, its benefits to our students, our communities and our state;

Whereas the financial concerns continue to escalate even as the FY19 System Office budget will increase an additional \$2.4M, while the community colleges' budget will be cut by \$5.9M;

Whereas the NEASC response notes that "The twelve separately accredited community colleges are continued in accreditation,...";

Whereas the following NEASC standards address the need for independently accredited institutions to be responsible for the quality of their own academic programs, as noted: "The institution's chief academic officer is directly responsible to the chief executive officer, and in concert with the faculty and other academic administrators, is responsible for the quality of the academic program..." (3.14) The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise." (3.15); and

Whereas untold amounts of time and money have been poured into a proposal that will not save money, will be detrimental to our students, will be detrimental to the communities we serve, and will be detrimental to the state of CT and CT public Higher Education; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Norwalk Community College Senate:

1. calls for the Students First General Education Workgroup to cease and desist in its effort to create a single common general education core for the individually accredited colleges;
2. calls for the dissolution of all committees, workgroups and other related entities that were created specifically to address the "Students First Consolidation" plan; and
3. calls for the restructure of the System Office to remove unnecessary and duplicative managerial staff that will allow the individually accredited institutions to be responsible for their own management. In addition, the Board of Regents should only be responsible for strategic direction, non-academic system policies and interaction with the legislature. These actions would save millions of dollars while promoting the autonomy and the integrity of the colleges and universities.

Approved by the Norwalk Community College Senate at its May 16, 2018 meeting with a unanimous vote of 31-0