

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CONNSCU: INITIAL SUGGESTIONS **(Central Connecticut State University - August 2013)**

I have divided these suggestions into two sets. The first includes items which I believe pertain to the overall Plan and should be common to all institutions. They are not program specific in nature, and as such should be items that all institutions, at least potentially, can embrace. The second set of items include a few examples of strengths that I think may be program areas in which Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) could take the lead, or at least participate. I do not mean to imply that these are areas in which other institutions do not engage, but rather ones that may be a higher emphasis for CCSU, just as different areas are of greater emphasis to the other institutions.

The following are some suggestions which I think are critical to our overall planning. I believe that consideration of these items is imperative if we are going to be able to develop enough legislative and gubernatorial support.

1. The Plan should to actively engage the faculty of the Universities with their colleagues in the Community Colleges. This engagement should be focused on building programs going well beyond simply easing transfer via articulation. The programs should be ones which actually involve mutual effort in terms of design. While we have had some successes with articulation, I think the slow progress of changing the actual number of transfers has been caused largely by virtue of the premise that most of the plans are based on administrative intervention. If faculty get together, they will find that they share many common interests, and can build programmatic liaisons that can truly justify the formulation of the System. (This is also a good spot to think about President Gray's suggestion for tuition reduction for those who are direct transfers with A.A. degrees from ConnSCU Community Colleges to the Universities.)
2. The program areas that we recommend must focus on areas of economic development and employment needs of the State; HOWEVER, we must always remember that it is also our job to fully and liberally educate every student. While that part of the educational process may not hold as much current interest with some in public office, we must protect those values ourselves. In short, we need to find ways to gain new resources for programs that meet employment needs, but we must also use our existing resources in ways to support liberal education for which we may not be able to get new resources.
3. The Plan must focus both intent and resources on raising the degree attainment of the citizens of the State. The data here has been widely shared and it is clear that Connecticut is not headed in the right direction. The gap between "haves" and "have-nots" is growing, and

while in total we still have a relatively high percentage of state residents with college degrees, that position has slipped nationally. Further, when compared with the number of adults age 18-25 currently enrolled in higher education, we have slipped dramatically. It is critical for us to clarify that real growth, at least in part, must come from demographic areas in which there is the highest amount of room for improvement. While it is certainly appropriate to recruit upper middle class majority students from high achievement high schools, the vast majority of those students already attend college, and a high percentage of them graduate. This certainly does not mean that we should ignore improvements in this segment of the population, but we must look to how we will improve the State's record with lower income and minority students from schools that don't have the same level of attainment. That involves recognizing that our approach to remedial education has not been working and that we must find more successful routes. Again, I realize there has been much work done in this area already but the success rate has yet to be proven.

4. The Plan must emphasize improving retention and graduation rates at our institutions while increasing diversity. All ConnSCU institutions have made progress in that area, but we are still not at a point, either individually or collectively, where we can rest on past progress. We really need to get our graduation rates up into the range of 60% to view ourselves competitively as outstanding regional public comprehensive institutions; that implies retention rates well over 80%.
5. The Plan should include entrepreneurial ways to expand our resources for both support of student persistence and to finance high quality programs, while containing costs for students. As two examples, we need to substantially build endowments specifically for the purpose of student scholarships. Also, we should greatly increase the amount of non-credit academic work for which we contract with stockholders. Scholarships reduce student costs without adding to student debt, and a financially successful continuing education program, for adult learners not necessarily interested in credits, adds revenue to help support both individual faculty and departments.
6. The Plan should include alternative forms of instruction. We should fully include technology assisted instruction and delivery. Charter Oak State College is a resource which needs to be fully utilized.

The following are a few of the areas in which I think that CCSU needs to capitalize. Some are areas in which we have already had great success, some are areas where we simply have strategic advantages but have not capitalized on yet.

1. We need to emphasize the use of public transportation, particularly, the new CTfastrak Busway. This is a project which the Governor has supported heavily, and for which the State will need to demonstrate extensive usage. At CCSU, we are in the center of the Busway route and could bring many students from the Hartford, West Hartford, Newington, and New Britain areas to the campus. It is also an important “green” initiative.
2. CCSU needs to emphasize STEM areas broadly defined. By “STEM,” I do not mean just Engineering and Technology, although we have an extensive School of Engineering and Technology. I also believe we should capitalize on the fact that we are the largest producer of secondary Mathematics teachers in the State, that we have an extensive Construction Management Program, we have an extensive Geographic Information Systems Program, and numerous other areas that would fit under “STEM” broadly defined.
3. We need to emphasize Graduate Education and research in an applied way. We should not focus only on Undergraduate Education because we have numerous strengths at CCSU, as well as other institutions, that can be benefitted by expanded Graduate offerings. We should make our current offerings more accessible to populations via differentiated times, mediated learning, and technology-assisted delivery. We also can expand programs into areas that require new training for certification, such as our proposed Doctorate of Nurse Anesthesia Practice Program.
4. Criminology and Criminal Justice can be a substantial emphasis for CCSU. We have a very strong department with extensive faculty and a large number of students. We also have a number of externally funded projects, such as the Sentencing Commission, that potentially can complement this emphasis. We have numerous contacts through the Legislature, in terms of academic program, faculty, and our grant supported staff.
5. International Education can be an important emphasis for CCSU. Having the Muirhead Center for International Education, which is already recognized by the System as a Center of Excellence, can enable us to provide many resources to the Community Colleges and to our fellow Universities. The Center could help expand both the number of international students which come to our institutions and the number of students and faculty who travel internationally to other institutions.