

Resolution in Opposition to CCSU Participation in the ACUE "Student Success through Quality Instruction"

Background: At its June 2017 meeting of the Board of Regents of CSCU, a presentation was made, entitled "Student Success Through Quality Instruction" by the ACUE (Association of College and University Educators), which aims to "better support CSCU's 6,700 (sic) faculty, to make instructional quality a strategic driver of student retention, graduation and learning". ACUE is a recently organized association directed by former higher education administrators, and headed by an individual (Jonathan Gyorko) who has previously supplied "educational services" to the State of Connecticut, and is currently suing the state for non-payment of fees. The program involves -- at a cost reported to be in the millions of dollars, supposedly to be paid by external donors -- teaching faculty the basics of "preparing an effective syllabus", "motivating your students", "delivering an effective lecture", etc., all of which fall within existing faculty competences and which are evaluated and assisted at the institutional level through existing structures.

Whereas the CCSU Senate has already, at its April meeting, voted no-confidence in the CSCU administration over its "Students First" policy, then the latest in a string of failed multi-million dollar projects promoted by the system office, and whose real aim is not student success, but "back office" consolidation detrimental to student success;

Whereas numerous CCSU and other CSCU faculty attended the May Board of Regents meeting to criticize the "Design Thinking" document prepared by the system Provost and Academic affairs office, which aimed to extend system office control to curriculum, which to the contrary is an exclusively individual institution and faculty area of governance;

Whereas the system office has now adopted, without any consultation of CCSU faculty, a project known as "Student Success Through Quality Instruction", which would pay undisclosed sums -- reportedly in the millions of dollars - to the "Association of College and University Educators", run by former senior administrators at various universities, at a time when the budget for public higher education is being cut and cut again;

Whereas the President of the CSCU system claims that "private donors" will pay for this project, thereby diverting money that could otherwise accrue to individual institution foundations for other academically needed purposes, and outsourcing to external funding the improvement of the key faculty area of competence, teaching;

Whereas the ACUE in its literature indicates that the CSCU system has "adopted" its program, and the System Office has already signed on to pilots for implementation at two CSU Universities (not CCSU) and two community colleges without any public discussion or consultation;

Whereas the project aims at teaching faculty how to teach, based entirely on ACUE "research", and not on faculty based knowledge of their disciplines, experience as teachers, or existing faculty development centers; and is therefore redundant and external to our real needs;

Whereas the project aims at "certifying" those who take the ACUE course and "hear from" external experts as determined by ACUE, thereby dividing faculty into two groups: certified and non-certified, in contradiction with our collective agreement which recognizes only faculty-based evaluation, including peer reviewed academic ranks as marks of distinction;

Whereas the project requires participation in a 25-hour on-line course, which in the case of part-time faculty would be an unpaid imposition on their scarce time;

Be it resolved, that the CCSU Senate:

Rejects participation of CCSU in the ACUE project as unnecessary and redundant to existing university-based programs and criteria for evaluating and improving teaching; developed without faculty consultation; and involving external funding and influence over teaching, an area of exclusive faculty control;

Communicates this resolution to the other CSCU Senates as an expression of our concern for yet another ill-conceived, unnecessary project by the System Office.