

Questions for the Nominee for Executive Director of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System

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Executive Director of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) ([CGS §§ 10-95i, -95q & -95r](#))

[CTECS](#) operates 17 high schools, with an [enrollment](#) of more than 11,000 students, that offer a range of career and technical education programs in addition to the courses found at regular comprehensive high schools. It also operates two aviation mechanics and maintenance technician schools for adult learners ([Hartford](#) and [Stratford](#)) and an education center for high school upperclassmen and adults ([Bristol](#)).

Through legislation, CTECS became an independent state agency in 2022 and is no longer part of the State Department of Education (SDE). The agency is led by an executive director, who is appointed by the governor. The executive director (1) hires the superintendent of the system; (2) receives advice and recommendations from the CTECS board; and (3) is responsible for the operation and administration and financial accountability of CTECS in matters relating to the central office, system-wide management, and other noneducational matters. Any person appointed to be executive director must have experience in educational systems.

Questions

1. The law creating CTECS as an independent agency calls for a system executive director, the equivalent of a state department commissioner, and a superintendent, to serve as the chief educational position overseeing the schools and training programs. This means that the superintendent answers to the executive director, who the governor appoints. But since

CTECS became independent, most of that time the executive director has functioned as both superintendent and executive director. Recently an interim superintendent was appointed. Are their plans to hire a permanent superintendent or do you expect to fill both roles?

2. As of July 1, 2022, CTECS became fully independent of SDE. As you may be the second executive director of this newly independent agency, are there particular challenges you are facing?
3. Recently SDE and the State Board of Education have launched an investigation into CTECS admissions policy regarding special education students. The question is whether CTECS is in violation of federal special education law regarding its policy for admissions and the education of these students. Are you familiar with the issue and how do you see it possibly being resolved?
4. In recent years there have been a significant number of teaching vacancies at CTECS, and the previous executive director testified that vacancies for trade instructors are particularly hard to fill. Can you tell us the current number of vacancies and how you hope to recruit more qualified teachers and instructors?
5. Almost every year, the CTECS system has students on waiting lists hoping for a spot. At the same time, we know there are many in the skilled workforce, whether at Electric Boat or Pratt and Whitney, who are expected to retire soon and add to the demand for these workers. Does CTECS have any plans to expand its capacity beyond the roughly 11,000 students it has today?
6. By law, the system must regularly evaluate and reauthorize its existing trade programs. Do you believe there are programs that should be added? Are there some that should no longer be offered? How does CTECS coordinate the trade program offerings with the needs of the various industries seeking trained workers?
7. CTECS also has the duty to maintain a rolling three-year capital improvement plan and to annually submit this plan to the Education; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; and Appropriations committees. One project, the renovation of [Bullard-Havens Technical High School](#) in Bridgeport, has been authorized by the legislature, and then reauthorized several times over a period of years as the project has changed in scope. Another renovation project, [Windham Technical High School](#), was approved and then reauthorized twice, most recently three years ago. Can you give us a progress report on these projects?
8. When students graduate from CTECS, they also earn a Connecticut Technical Education certificate, which can be in the form of a state occupational license or an industry-recognized credential. What are some of the most successful licenses and credentials that are enabling graduates to gain employment?
9. [Work-based learning](#) allows students using the skills they have learned at a technical high school to work for an employer and get paid during the student's trade instructional time. Are there more students seeking work-based learning opportunities than are currently available? What steps is CTECS taking to keep the program at full strength or even expand it?

10. What are your long-range goals for CTECS?

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