

## **February 27, 2024 – Higher Education and Advancement Committee**

Good morning Senator Slap, Representative Haddad and members of the Committee,

My name is Seth Freeman, and I am a Professor at CT State Capital and President of Congress of CT Community Colleges which represents full-time and part-time faculty and staff across our twelve community college campuses, and part-time faculty at Charter Oak State College and University of Hartford.

My testimony today will focus on CT State Community College, but I also will briefly mention Teaching Faculty at Charter Oak State College as well who are in the process of bargaining their first contract.

### **CT State Community College**

CT State Community College is in crisis due to the insufficient funding provided by the legislature last year, and because of gross mis-management by CSCU and CT State managers.

Beginning last summer, we have seen drastic cuts to essential services across our community colleges. CT State has eliminated over 200 part-time staff positions. Additionally, CT State has left dozens of full-time faculty and staff positions vacant. Between the cuts to part-time staff and the unfilled full-time vacancies, every community college campus has made drastic and painful cuts to student-facing services. Cuts to course offerings, cuts to tutoring, library, career services, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), student activities, mental health services, advising, workforce development, cafeteria, food pantry, fitness center services and more. The cuts are significantly eroding the quality of services in our colleges and hurting our students.

These drastic cuts this year come on the heels of years of smaller cuts, and years of unfilled FT positions.

These cuts are a direct result of insufficient funding from the legislature and chronic and spectacular mis-management by CSCU and CT State managers.

In our CSCU system, our system managers and Board of Regents continue to horrifically fail to manage our system. Chancellor Cheng, and President Ojakian before him, failed all of you by repeatedly lying to you about the goals and outcomes of merging our community colleges. Both men told fairy tales to this body, tales of magical savings CSCU would achieve and tales of magical equity for Black and Brown students. Both men told you the lies that too many of you wanted to hear, that by merging our community college system, we would reduce costs while simultaneously improving services.

These leaders have led our system to the crisis we face today. A community college system that is simultaneously under-resourced and spectacularly mis-managed, with a new top-heavy managerial structure with well-paid managers in distant offices, while student-facing services and classroom services are bare-boned and being eliminated.

All the lies from President Ojakian and Chancellor Cheng are crashing down on our students. What our faculty and staff warned the legislature five years ago has come to pass. Through the merger we have wasted millions of dollars on bloated levels of statewide managers. Every dime spend on statewide managers is a dime taken away from student-facing services on our campuses. Now every year our campus budgets have shrunk, while budgets for CSCU and CT State managers have increased.

Additionally, all the lies about CSCU Shared Services are also now coming to light. CSCU managers said that moving to CSCU Shared Services would create efficiencies and improve services. This is not the experience of faculty and staff on our campuses. CSCU Shared Services is overwhelmingly viewed as a failure. Our experience of Shared Services is emptied and hollowed out Human Resources and Business offices on our campuses, which provide much lower quality of service for faculty, staff, students and administrators.

CT State managers recently provided the following budgetary data that shows how the merger and CSCU Shared Services is siphoning resources from our campuses.

#### Total Expenditures by Campus:

	System Office	CSCU Shared Services	Asnuntuck	Capital	Gateway	Housatonic	Manchester	Middlesex
FY 19	26,293,876		21,264,646	35,983,038	61,713,629	44,441,496	53,636,524	24,243,682
FY 20	30,015,808		21,573,359	35,963,566	60,369,177	43,242,415	51,872,501	24,234,871
FY 21	36,569,493		20,433,091	35,632,071	61,481,881	41,227,156	50,887,375	24,306,915
FY 22	6,081,386		19,976,100	32,520,603	57,214,995	38,609,605	47,443,045	23,003,558
FY 23	7,552,883	60,518,396	22,902,065	36,549,462	61,461,033	41,930,655	49,084,787	25,019,075
FY 24	7,038,906	72,093,887	15,086,698	25,512,172	43,482,740	29,989,881	33,097,931	18,821,866
	Middlesex	Naugatuck	Norwalk	Northwestern	Quinebaug	Three Rivers	Tunxis	Total
FY 19	24,243,682	59,905,144	48,315,930	16,409,040	16,367,414	36,296,788	35,341,798	480,213,005
FY 20	24,234,871	58,933,097	47,144,222	16,417,070	16,653,916	35,384,197	34,948,839	476,753,038
FY 21	24,306,915	58,207,555	44,735,494	16,483,339	16,465,352	34,983,292	36,088,091	477,501,105
FY 22	23,003,558	55,023,255	42,831,540	15,262,100	14,912,723	31,250,708	33,808,632	417,938,250
FY 23	25,019,075	58,688,084	45,841,479	17,166,786	17,211,220	34,741,336	34,856,013	513,523,274
FY 24	18,821,866	39,597,486	33,843,148	11,792,804	12,694,137	25,014,889	24,589,108	392,655,653

Note above that CSCU Shared Services cost \$72 million dollars this year. We are spending exorbitant amount of money on System Office and CSCU Shared Services, while campus budgets are being decimated.

**I want to highlight Manchester's budget. It went from \$53 million in FY 2019 to \$33 million in FY2024.**

This is painful to see in plain numbers. But this has happened on every campus, and why our campus services – our student-facing services – are being eroded.

Sadly, Chancellor Cheng is still failing you today. He is failing you by telling you that \$47 million is enough to provide the resources and services our CSCU students deserve. Chancellor Cheng and the Board of Regents are still not fighting for CSCU students, but rather serving Governor Lamont's austerity agenda. Their ask of \$47 million is not enough. \$47 million for CSCU will not restore the cuts that have been made. \$47 million will not stop the tuition hikes.

Our faculty, staff, and students are here to tell our truth. We need \$160 million dollars to stop the 5% tuition hikes, reverse the terrible cuts that are destroying our colleges and hurting our students. Cuts and tuition hikes that are guaranteed to hurt retention and hurt enrollment, and only deepen the crisis we are already in.

We need the legislature to provide more oversight over CSCU and CT State managers, to ensure the funding you provide goes directly to our campuses for student-facing services. As the chart above shows, our campus budgets have been decimated, and our CSCU and CT State managers are grossly mis-managing the resources provided by the state.

Our students are depending on you to fix the crisis that you caused last year. Please do what is right for our students so CT can once again have one of the best community college systems in the country. Please do not sacrifice our working-class students and our Black and Brown students across our community colleges, to serve the lie that our state can't afford to fund our community college system and provide our students the quality of education they deserve.

### Charter Oak State College

Charter Oak State College Teaching Faculty, who are all part-time, and all online teaching faculty, have recently formed their union and are bargaining their first contract.

Charter Oak Teaching faculty for the past 30 years, were the only faculty in the CSCU system that were not unionized. They recently won their union last Fall semester.

Charter Oak State College for decades has grossly underpaid their faculty, and they have balanced their budgets on the backs on their teaching faculty. Some basic data from 2012 shows the following:

- COSC Student Tuition has risen **40%** since FY12 to FY24 from \$236 to \$329 per credit
- COSC Administrative Staff salaries have risen approximately **40%** between this same time, consistent with other higher education bargaining units (including community college faculty and staff)
- Inflation has risen approximately 34% over this time period
- **COSC teaching faculty have seen flat salary, 0% salary increase since 2012**

COSC Teaching Faculty are fighting for equity and respect in their contract negotiations right now.

Just like our community colleges and our state universities, today CSCU managers are failing to request the funding to properly fund Charter Oak State College. Proper funding for COSC recognizes that teaching faculty need to be compensated fairly and respected. We need this legislature to support equity for Charter Oak teaching faculty, and ensure COSC faculty are provided a fair contract and well overdue compensation.