



March 1, 2011

**To: The Honorable Senator John Fonfara, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative T.R. Rowe, Co-Chair
Program Review and Investigations Committee**

From: Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor

Re: Higher Education Governance Structure

A Public Agenda for Higher Education

The Board of Trustees for Connecticut's Community Colleges has recently passed a resolution recommending that the Governor and the General Assembly give consideration to the recommendations included in the Report on Higher Education Governance Structure by the Program Review and Investigations Committee approved by the Committee in December 2010.

The report, based on an extensive review of various models of governance for public higher education throughout the country, their history, classifications and effectiveness, recommends the creation of a **public agenda for higher education**. Included in the findings of the report on the effectiveness of governance models were the following conclusions:

- No single governance structure is best.
- Each state is unique, structure has to evolve.
- [CT] Should not "copy" other state's structure.

Overall, the report recommends "establishing goals before overhauling governance largely because the research on Connecticut's governance found a clear lack of state policy leadership and accountability, with the Board of Governors "lacking the standing needed to lead a comprehensive planning and accountability effort." The report concludes that this lack of leadership poses a risk to Connecticut's economic competitiveness.

Therefore the report recommends the development of a comprehensive strategic plan for higher education that would involve a leadership group in developing a **Public Agenda for Higher Education** including:

- Assessing the state's higher education needs;
- Creating strategies to meet these needs;
- Setting goals and monitoring of progress; and
- Recommending financing and policies to better match higher education goals with the state's goals.

The comprehensive public agenda for Connecticut's higher education enterprise would include:

- "A public needs report ... that recognizes and reinforces differences in constituent unit missions and capacities;
- A higher education policy audit report matched to the needs analysis;
- A public agenda priorities report, specific strategies, and measurable objectives;
- A finance report on current financing policies, practices, and accountability."

*Higher Education Governance Structure, December 2010
Program Review and Investigations Committee Report*

The concluding recommendation of the study is to create “a statement of ... principles about the role that higher education plays in the state - **a Public Agenda** - to assess needs, create strategies to meet those needs, monitor and incentivize them.” This is offered by the report “as the best way to improve the state’s system ... and to not dampen the individual success that Connecticut’s higher education institutions have achieved, [and] to augment them by addressing recognized state needs.”

The Board of Trustees strongly endorses this proposal as practical and far preferable to an unplanned reorganization that risks the success of institutions and Connecticut’s higher education enterprise overall. More importantly, at greatest risk are the students of Connecticut and the State of Connecticut itself which relies on an educated and skilled workforce to ensure its economic prosperity.

Before we change Connecticut’s system of public higher education, we must first ask: Will students be better off? Will the colleges and universities in the system be better able to achieve their missions, and will the State and its citizens be better served throughout public higher education?