

ACHIEVING THE MISSION OF CONNSCU: STUDENT SUCCESS

The goals of ConnSCU include :

1. A successful first year
2. Student success in graduation with “knowledge and skills to achieve their life and career goals;
3. Creation of equity for all students as defined by differences among “ethnic/racial, economic and gender groups.

SUPPORT OF THE MISSION

Support for design of success programs

To achieve the mission of ConnSCU, both cognitive and non-cognitive factors, (i.e. academic support and personal/social support) for student success must be included.

Noncognitive factors are supported by the presence of

1. Peer support groups for students across all areas of study;
2. Mentors for students;
3. Intentional design of all learning experiences so that they integrate academic knowledge and support (tutoring) with personal/social support;
4. A clear understanding by all faculty and staff of the learning process. The learning process includes four elements: information acquisition, emotional engagement, application/practice, and integration into the student’s sense of purpose in life. All elements must be present for students to learn in a meaningful way so that they can succeed. Support personnel must have an awareness of the context of students’ lives and the effect of chronic stress/trauma on the learning process.

Given the powerful nature of these factors, it becomes essential that Learning Centers and members of the student affairs staff whose roles include creation of any of these supportive elements be included in the design of programs that support student success from the beginning of the process.

Support for training of persons who work in these programs

The master’s degree in Student Development in Higher Education at CCSU enrolls about 25 students per year who are thoroughly trained in the learning process, particularly the noncognitive elements. These students also learn to run groups, to mentor undergraduate students and to help students learn the skills of academic success and mitigation of stress in their lives. Through the various field placements, internships and assistantships, these graduate students provide a significant degree of support to undergraduates in a variety of contexts. There is minimal financial support for this master’s program. CCSU receives permission to hire 20 graduate interns per year and several of these interns work in areas that support student learning but most work in other areas. All internships are supported out the budgets of the departments that hire them. For \$19,000 per year interns work 40 hours a week, receive tuition, and attend school part time.

Proposal

1. Identify and fund 12 or more internships per year exclusively for students in the SDHE program, all of whom will work in student success programs that support undergraduates. Funding for these internships would come as a designated portion of the CCSU budget, under the control of the Program Coordinator of the SDHE program and/or the Director of The Learning Center.
2. **Cost \$228,000** per year; (note: this amount is different from the one that appeared in the original statement because of a calculating error)
Equivalent cost for hiring full-time professionals to accomplish similar tasks at \$40,000 per year plus benefits, approximately **\$638,400**.

The SDHE program is housed in the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy. One faculty member is responsible for teaching all the major courses and for program administration which includes advising about 60 students per year, placing about 45 per year in various field sites and insuring that those in the field are receiving appropriate supervision and developing the skills of their profession. The SDHE program would benefit significantly from the presence of a part-time program administrator to support the administrative elements necessary for the program to continue its contribution to the success of undergraduate students. SDHE students currently are placed at CCSU, ECSU, SCSU, Naugatuck Valley CC, Capital CC, Manchester CC, Tunxis CC, Middlesex CC and occasionally at Quinnebaug Valley CC. Masters students in this program support the success of undergraduates in both two and four year colleges throughout central Connecticut.

3. **Additional Cost for program administrator \$8,000 (no benefits).**

Administrative conundrum

CCSU is plagued by an administrative conundrum which is largely a matter of accounting protocols. We are pressured simultaneously to admit more students and to cut the budget for our part-time teaching faculty. As a department that trains professionals in counseling and therapy, we employ many part-time faculty who are practicing in their own areas of expertise and therefore are excellent teacher/mentors to graduate students. All of our classes need to be small (typically 15 students) in order to teach and train our students effectively and remain in compliance with accreditation standards. Places in our programs are in high demand because we train mental health professionals, school counselors and marriage and family therapists as well as student development professionals. It would be tremendously beneficial to our department if the accounting procedures could be changed. We need to establish a student/faculty ratio that allows us to admit enough students to meet the demand for mental health professionals while also being able to hire enough qualified faculty members to teach our courses. Succinctly, we need to be able to use tuition money generated by our own students to hire part-time faculty so that courses can be offered when there is sufficient student demand. The need for graduates of our programs will increase significantly as Connecticut decides how to respond to the Sandy Hook tragedy and the current accounting system makes expanding our enrollments while maintaining quality teaching and training almost impossible.