

Questions for the Office of Higher Education Executive Director Nominee

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Office of Higher Education Executive Director ([CGS § 10a-1d](#))

The executive director implements the Office of Higher Education's (OHE) policies and directives, which include, among other things, the licensure and accreditation of independent higher education programs and institutions and oversight of private occupational schools, state scholarship and financial aid programs, and the alternative route to teaching certification (ARC) program.

Questions

1. How has your professional and legislative experience to date prepared you to be a successful executive director of OHE?
2. What higher education policy issues do you believe the General Assembly should prioritize this session?
3. OHE administers the state's Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program, which assists residents who are undergraduates at Connecticut public and private colleges and universities ([CGS § 10a-173](#)). How does the office currently calculate the distribution of scholarship funds among the state's institutions?
4. This session, the General Assembly's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee is considering several bills to permanently exempt independent higher education institutions from needing OHE's approval for new academic programs ([Proposed SB 26](#), [Proposed SB 131](#), [Raised HB 7088](#)). You recently testified on HB

7088 about consumer protection concerns that the office has about removing program approval requirements. What are the greatest areas of concern you have relating to these bills?

5. In 2017, the legislature passed a law that transferred from the Board of Regents for Higher Education to your office the duty to publish green jobs courses, certificates, and programs at high schools and colleges, along with an inventory of the equipment used by these schools ([PA 17-63](#), § 5). Since acquiring this duty, has OHE gained any insight about green jobs training that could be helpful to the legislature's pursuit of economic and workforce advancement policies?
6. In recent years, the abrupt closure of several private occupational schools required the office to take administrative action to protect enrolled students' interests. What steps does OHE take when such a closure occurs? Do you believe OHE is well-equipped to protect students' monetary and academic investments should closures continue to occur?
7. At the direction of the legislature, OHE has entered into a multistate reciprocity agreement (SARA, the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement) that allows Connecticut's higher education institutions to participate in distance learning programs across the country ([PA 16-120](#)). Has your office found that participation in SARA, with its 49-state membership, has been beneficial to Connecticut's institutions and students? Have there been any unforeseen drawbacks to Connecticut participating in this agreement?
8. The ARC program prepares mid-career adults for positions in teacher shortage areas. What are the current subject shortage areas for which ARC offers training? Do you have any thoughts on how to attract participants to these shortage areas?
9. Two years ago, the legislature passed an act requiring OHE to promote federal student loan forgiveness programs by distributing information to public service employers ([PA 17-206](#)). What are some additional ways your office could help educate student borrowers before they enter the workforce, or even before they enroll in a higher education institution?
10. What role can OHE play in Connecticut's efforts to strengthen workforce development?

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