

Questions for Nominees to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Board

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Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) (CGS §§ [10-95i](#), [-95k](#), and [-95s](#))

[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 (in [Hartford](#) and [Stratford](#)) and an education center for high school upperclassmen and adults (in [Bristol](#)). Through legislation, CTECS is now an independent state agency 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 board advises the CTECS executive director and superintendent, the agency's educational head, on matters relating to vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education and training. Also, it must establish specific achievement goals for students at each grade level and measure the performance of each CTECS school. Every five years the board must adopt a long-range plan of CTECS's priorities and goals and submit the plan to the Education; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; and Appropriations committees. The law requires the board, every five years, to establish a schedule to evaluate and reauthorize the system's existing trade programs and consider adding new trade programs. The board must also maintain a rolling three-year capital improvement and equipment plan that must be annually submitted to the same three committees mentioned above.

In addition, the board must submit a biennial report to the Education Committee that includes an assessment of student outcomes and demographic information on CTECS applicants, enrolled students, and graduates.

Questions

1. CTECS has just become fully independent of SDE as of July 1, 2022 (in fact this is the first time its board appointees have come before the legislature for approval). As a member of this newly reconstituted board, are there particular challenges you expect to face as CTECS begins down its own path as an independent agency?
2. Why do you want to serve on the board? What will be your priorities and what to you hope to accomplish?
3. The law creating CTECS as an independent agency calls for a system executive director, the equivalent of a state department commissioner, and superintendent, to serve as the chief educational position overseeing the schools and training programs. This also means that the superintendent answers to the executive director, who is appointed by the governor. But since CTECS became an independent entity, the executive director, [Dr. Ellen Solek](#), is also serving as the interim superintendent. How important do you think it is to have a separate person in each role?
4. One of the board's duties is to evaluate and reauthorize the system's existing trade programs, do you believe there are programs that should be added? Are there some that should no longer be offered? How does the board coordinate the trade program offerings with the needs of the various industries seeking trained workers?
5. Another duty of the board's is 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 as the project has changed in scope. Can you tell us whether this project has made any progress?
6. 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 the graduates to gain employment? Do you know what percentage of these graduates remain in Connecticut?
7. [Work-based learning](#) involves 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. Your 2020-2021 [annual report](#) shows that as of June 2021, there were 661 students involved in work-based learning through CTECS. Has the pandemic decreased the number of opportunities for students in this program? 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?

8. School districts all across the state are facing a teacher shortage and a shortage of other necessary staff. We were recently told by a CTECS official that the system has 180 vacant teacher positions. How is the system handling this? Is there a shortage of qualified staff for certain trades in particular?
9. In recent years, advocates for special education students have argued the CTECS application process has prevented many special education students from attending a CTECS high school. In 2021, the legislature changed the law to create a new planning and placement team process for special education students before the student enrolls in CTECS. Has this change led to an increased enrollment of special education students?

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