

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](#)). Last session, the legislature established a task force to recommend changes to the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program ([PA 22-101, § 3](#)). Can you explain the work the task force completed, and what recommendations it made?
4. This session, the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee is considering legislation to alter and expand the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. What changes, if any, do you believe the program needs?
5. This session, the General Assembly's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee is considering a bill to improve the state efforts in the retention of graduates

from the state's higher education institutions. What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges the state is facing regarding graduate retention?

6. What role can OHE play in Connecticut's efforts to strengthen workforce development?
7. In 2019, the legislature established the Connecticut Open Educational Resource Coordinating Council (OER) to, among other things, (1) establish a program to lower the cost of textbooks and course materials for certain courses at state higher education institutions and (2) identify high-impact courses for which OER's will be developed, converted, or adopted. In 2021, the council [reported](#) that 1,821 students in 105 course sections avoided \$227,000 in textbook costs. What steps can the council take to expand this program, if any? How else might you address the rising costs of materials?
8. What are some ways your office is helping to educate student borrowers on their loan obligations before they enroll in a higher education institution or enter the workforce?
9. Last year, the legislature required each private occupational school, regional workforce development board, community action agency, and State Board of Education-approved ARC program provider to submit to OHE-specified data on each of their enrolled students or trainees who earns a credential offered by any of these entities ([PA 21-2, § 269](#)). How does OHE plan on using this data? What insights have you gleaned that can improve OHE's functionality? Have all the institutions submitted this data?
10. The [CT Scholars Scholarship Program](#) software went live on July 1, 2022. This financial aid processing system replaced five separate databases that have been used to process applications for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship, Minority Teacher Incentive, John R. Justice Loan Reimbursement and GEAR UP programs. Additionally, the system allows students to check their financial aid status, determine when aid will be distributed to their school, and allow institutional users to certify student eligibility for state financial aid. How has this change impacted the number of scholarship applications increased since the launch of this system?

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