

STUDY FOCUS

Higher Education Governance Structure and Connecticut State University System

Focus

This study would focus on two aspects of higher education. The first part would examine the overall higher education governance structure in Connecticut. The current and historical structure would be compared to postsecondary education coordination and governance models.

The second part would review the following areas of the Connecticut State University System (CSUS):

1. administrative functions to determine the rate of growth, if there is duplication of certain services, and, if possible, the costs of those services; and
2. the extent to which existing cost saving ideas have been implemented and, when possible to determine, their impact.

Background

Higher education governance. Connecticut's public higher education system is overseen by five boards (see figure). Four of the governing boards have fairly broad authority in terms of managing the financial and administrative affairs of their individual constituent units. These boards are the: University of Connecticut (UConn), Connecticut State University System (CSUS), and Connecticut Community College System (CCCS); the Board for State Academic Awards governs the online Charter Oak State College. The fifth board, Board of Governors for Higher Education (BGHE), is charged with setting cross-system priorities and submitting a consolidated higher education budget to the legislature. Public higher education governance and oversight have frequently been the subject of debates and studies. Many of these studies attempted to delineate a governance structure that balanced the accountability needs of the state with maintaining an appropriate degree of institutional flexibility.

CSUS administrative functions. The Connecticut State University System is composed of four distinct universities. A system office, headed by a chancellor, coordinates policies among the institutions and handles certain administrative functions for the president-led universities, which also have some administrative offices. Like the state's other public higher education constituent units, CSUS is overseen by a board of trustees that has authority over a range of decisions, including administrative. The state appropriated nearly \$163 million to CSUS in FY 2011 through a block grant.¹ In recent years, the state has funded about 44 percent of total CSUS operating expenditures, when employee fringe benefits and state-issued student financial aid are included.²

¹ Office of Fiscal Analysis

² DHE, "Higher Education Counts; Achieving Results 2010."
<http://www.ctdhe.org/info/pdfs/2010/2010Accountability.pdf>

The timeframe for this study is shorter than typical for a PRI review, commencing in late summer and concluding in December. Thus the research activities will be more targeted than usual, providing as much depth as is possible within the time available.

