



Students First Community College Consolidation Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

On November 7 and 8, CSCU President Ojakian and Northwestern Community College President Rooke hosted two webinars to answer questions and provide an update on the Students First consolidation proposal. Hundreds of students and staff from all 12 colleges participated in these events. Below are questions that were submitted but not addressed during the webinars, categorized by common themes. These questions build on ones originally answered in the initial FAQ (www.ct.edu/studentsfirst/about#faqs). The planning process is ongoing and will engage a broad range of stakeholders going forward.

New Leadership Structure & Staffing

1. Does the consolidation add layers of management?

To achieve accreditation with NEASC as one institution, we had to create some positions that do not exist now. So instead of 12 presidents, one per campus, there is one new position, CEO/Vice Chancellor for the community college, that is required under NEASC standard 3.11. Similarly, a Chief Financial Officer and Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer positions are needed to comply with NEASC standards for a single institution. While there appears to be additional layers of regional and central management in this new structure, the overall headcount across the system will be reduced. Over time, by encouraging campuses to work together and shifting decision making to the regional or institutional level, we expect to need fewer management than we have now at the campus level.

2. Are we going to be able to share resources among colleges? Will shared positions be across regions or system-wide?

Sharing financial and staff resources are primary goals of the Student First proposal. Campuses do collaborate now on an ad hoc basis, but not in a coordinated or strategic way. Over time, position responsibilities will be expanded to hire people to span regions or centrally for the entire college. Through the experiences at Gateway/Housatonic and Asnuntuck/Tunxis this summer, we realized that collaborations and shared savings are achieved when working together.

3. What administrative decisions, including the budget, will be made locally and which will be made regionally or system wide? Will the Campus Vice President have the authority to determine local faculty/staff hires or will this be done by the Regional President?

The new Chief Financial Officer will establish the system budget and allocate resources to the regions. Budgets will be managed by the Regional Presidents, who will work with the campuses to adjust for specific budget needs. Campus Vice Presidents will manage local hiring.

4. Why not have four Regional Presidents and eliminate the Campus Vice Presidents?

Having four regions was one of many options considered, but was later reduced to three regions given the small size of our state. Each campus needs someone managing day-to-day activities, making hiring decisions locally and advocating for the campus. In addition, campus leaders play an important role in the community, serving on local boards, raising funds and ensuring that the campus programs prepare students for careers needed by the community. Based on feedback received through the public comment period, we are revisiting these roles.

5. What is the role of directors of finance positions and purchasing office staff across all the campuses? What is the new organizational structure for IT departments?

The specific details for finance, budgeting and purchasing are outlined in the Fiscal Affairs section of the Students First website at www.ct.ed/studentsfirst. IT staff will remain on campus to provide support for both educational and operational activities. Current staff can apply to serve in centralized or regional roles that span multiple campuses.

6. What is the role of an enrollment specialist? Will admissions be staffed locally?

A national trend in higher education recruitment and admissions is to cross-train staff in all aspects of on-boarding students. Enrollment Specialists should assist students with everything they need, including applying to the college, seeking financial aid and even selecting classes. This will serve students better than sending them to three separate departments. The Enrollment Specialist will be on-campus but knowledgeable about programs throughout the CSCU system so students get a more comprehensive picture of what to study and how to be successful.

7. Will department chairs and division directors be replaced by associate deans? How will you ensure parity in workload and responsibilities within these roles across campuses? Who will have oversight over tenure and promotion?

This is still being resolved. Currently, we have three categories of academic leadership among the 12 campuses: department chairs, division directors and associate deans. Our goal is to create a common position that works best for our students, faculty and campuses, but it will clearly take time to work through. We will strive to ensure parity in responsibilities as these positions are reviewed. Tenure and promotion procedures are outlined in the collective bargaining agreement, and involve the relevant supervisor in the case of tenure, and the dean in the case of promotion. These procedures, including the relevant tenure and promotion committees, will continue regardless of the title of the supervisor of the faculty and staff.

8. What is the role of the new college system office staff?

Many services handled at the campuses, such as financial aid processing, budgeting and finance will be consolidated to the single college level. The staff at the CSCU system office will continue to provide strategic direction and shared services such as human resources, legal affairs, government relations, and institutional research for all the colleges and universities.

9. What will be the role of the new college provost?

The Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs will be the chief academic and student affairs officer of the entire institution. The Provost will work closely with the deans on each of the 12 campuses to manage curriculum, assessment, faculty development, student success and much more, functioning similarly to how these positions operate now.

10. Is there an imbalance in workload between the proposed Campus Vice President and the Vice President for Enrollment Management?

We do not believe that there is an imbalance between these positions. The Campus VP will have day-to-day accountability for a safe and productive learning environment for that campus and to maintain strong connections with the surrounding communities. The VP for Enrollment Management will be responsible for assuring that effective enrollment management processes are streamlined across all 12 campuses, and that recruitment and enrollment of students is strong, through the regional executive directors.

11. What steps are being taken to position leadership jobs in the new college as both attractive and attainable? How will the newly created positions be filled to ensure equity and inclusion? Will the new chancellor position require higher education or public administration experience?

An open and competitive process will begin to fill key leadership roles. Staffing will primarily be done by searching among current college personnel, to identify those who have the skills and experience to move into new positions. Search committees will be broad-based and representative of the many stakeholder groups who know the colleges and the groups we serve, including faculty, staff and students, in the new college. Credentials required for any new positions will need to be determined as we move forward.

12. Will there be opportunity for cross-training/retraining for professionals in student facing services?

Yes, for example one of the primary goals of consolidation is to have enrollment management services across multiple campuses to develop streamlined processes for marketing, recruiting, admitting and retaining students. Staff in admissions, financial aid and registrar's offices across all campuses will work together to create a common experience for students, no matter which campus they go to.

13. How do you measure the efficacy of current staff to ensure the best client service?

A thorough review of processes will take place across all services as we move forward. Objective and subjective measures focused on job performance will guide the development of metrics to ensure best client service. Best practices will emerge and staff will be trained to adopt those practices.

14. How will the consolidation plan impact adjuncts?

Adjuncts will continue to play an important role in teaching our students, supplementing the work of our full time faculty.

15. What plans are in place to help employees manage change and ensure the highest quality of service and support?

Change brings with it opportunities for new ideas and ways of operating. We will continue to communicate as progress is being made and provide opportunities for training and professional development for faculty and staff who take on new roles and responsibilities.

Costs & Savings

1. The proposal calls for saving \$28 million through the consolidation. How will this be achieved?

The target savings are expected from strategic reductions in management and other positions. These savings can be achieved in the near term through attrition, position sharing and workforce reductions in management positions. Additional savings will come in the later years of implementation through consolidation of non-student facing positions across campuses.

2. How will resources be allocated to the campuses under the new model? Will schools with more enrollment growth get more resources?

Currently, campuses receive their share of the state block grant using a formula which takes into account FTE enrollment and a number of other factors. Any new budget formula proposed will ensure that campuses have enough resources to operate, given the declining state support. Since enrollment is a major factor in budgeting, campuses that see growth in enrollment may see more budget resources over time.

3. In the future, if the estimated savings are not achieved or our state support continues to get cut by the legislature, will we seek to close less financially stable colleges?

Creating a single institution is intended to alleviate the need to close any campus locations. CSCU President Ojakian has stated repeatedly that he does not want to close any campuses as this would severely inconvenience students who may not be able to access higher education without a campus in their local area.

Academic Affairs

- 1. Will campus faculty senates still exist? What is the role and membership of the broader college-wide faculty senate? What opportunities will there be for faculty to participate in campus leadership and provide input?**

The primary shared governance structure envisioned, in accordance with NEASC expectations, is at the institutional level, with broad representation across all 12 campuses. Input from the FAC has recommended that each campus have 1-2 representatives on the senate. This group will act similarly to those on the campuses now, reviewing curriculum and providing important input into the teaching and learning on campus. Campuses may wish to continue to provide a forum for local campus issues, but the primary governance body will be the institutional senate. It is also very helpful to have faculty and staff assume leadership roles in the new organization.

- 2. What is going to be the process for curriculum development and how do we protect academic freedom and shared governance? Where is the cross-disciplinary aspect of curriculum review?**

Curriculum development was previously done only at the individual campus level with no coordination (except in a small number of programs) of curriculum across campuses. Under Students First, faculty groups will be convened and asked to agree on curriculum for most of the system's degree programs and certificates. Where it makes sense, courses also will be aligned to have a common institutional syllabus with common learning outcomes, course title, course number, credits and pre-requisites.

Academic freedom is a foundational principle in higher education, and this will be preserved by giving faculty the ability to continue to teach their courses as they see fit, providing they follow the institutional syllabi agreed upon by the faculty in that discipline, and to help students attain the agreed upon learning objectives.

There will be an important shared governance process, with a faculty/staff senate representative of all 12 campuses, as well as a representative curriculum committee to review all programs and courses. As envisioned, proposals will go from the faculty disciplinary groups to the curriculum committee and simultaneously to the campuses for feedback. Both of these latter groups will allow for review by cross-discipline faculty and staff.

- 3. What process will ensure prerequisites are the same across the system?**

Faculty will continue to lead the curriculum and program development process. We expect faculty in each discipline or program to come up with common institutional courses, wherever appropriate, that have a common syllabus containing the learning outcomes, title, number and pre-requisite across all 12 campuses. How faculty choose to teach that course will be in their discretion in accordance with principles of academic freedom. Campuses will be able to maintain their unique accredited programs but students who qualify can potentially enroll statewide rather than only on that campus as in the past.

- 4. Will faculty be involuntarily moved from one campus to another?**

Any faculty relocations will follow the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement.

5. How are continuing education and workforce programs included within the new structure? How will we ensure responsiveness to local employers with a lengthy curriculum approval process?

Continuing education and workforce development programming will continue to be an active and important part of the life of the single college. Over time, it is expected that the programs and course offerings can be coordinated across the regions, ensuring that students can access the programs and courses that they need at any of the campuses. Campuses may have developed expertise in certain programs that will continue, but recruitment and marketing of these programs could be done regionally, and avoid having campuses compete with each other for students, as sometimes happens now.

Continuing education programs typically do not go through a lengthy curriculum review process, and won't in the future. The programs each campus offers may change over time but will always reflect the needs of the local or regional employer community. However, credit courses and programs are required to go through a governance review process by our accreditors, along with faculty oversight. It will be important to develop a streamlined process to ensure that these go through the approval process quickly.

Student Affairs

1. What will the student governance structure look like?

Since the 12 campuses will become a single institution, NEASC standards expect that students will have a governance role within the college. As such, a college student governance assembly will need to be formed with representatives from each campus. These representatives will report back to the local campus student government association (SGA).

2. Is there a plan to integrate guided pathways with the Students First initiative?

Yes. The guided pathways initiative is a key part of redesigning how we foster student enrollment, progress and completion, and will be integrated into the enrollment management and advising implementation. This will ultimately help students complete on time with less costs.

3. Will students have to take classes at other campuses to graduate?

The goal is to reduce the need for students to do this, while at the same time improving the process of taking classes at other campuses for those who need or want to. With consistent curriculum across the 12 campuses, students will find it easier to get the classes they need when or how (online or on-ground) they need them, especially to graduate.

4. Will campuses maintain their own media and specialty services that they currently have? Would this merger help other campuses create such services and activities such as student newspapers, clubs, and theater productions?

One of the many benefits of creating a single college with 12 campuses is that more collaboration and sharing of services can be achieved over time. Expertise at one campus will help develop new services at other campuses. Moving forward, student leadership in the new single college will need to develop policies to guide how student clubs and services work together.

5. Can a student get advising or financial aid help at another college if they cannot get it at their own?

Yes. With a single college, there will be one student data system and one financial aid application process. Staff from any campus will be able to help students with advising and financial aid, in addition to those at their primary campus.

6. Will students who attend more than one community college need to pay fees at each?

No. In a single college with 12 campuses, there will be only one set of student fees. Currently, when students attend more than one college they are often asked to pay duplicate fees that are sometimes reimbursed. There have been cases, however, where students are dropped for non-payment of a fee that they already paid at another college. This will not occur in the single college.

7. Does consolidation impact senior citizens taking free classes?

There are no anticipated changes in tuition waivers for senior citizens, veterans or other students who currently are eligible for that program.

8. How can we provide more resources to more high functioning autistic students who want to pursue an education?

As colleges work more closely together, our student disability services departments can share best practices, experts and speakers and cross-train staff to ensure that they have the skills to support all students with disabilities.

Additional General Questions

1. What criteria was used to determine the three regional groupings?

Several. Many variations were considered in the regional groupings, including not having regions. It was determined that regions were essential in creating synergies and implementing common processes among the campuses. One of the key purposes of the regions is to ensure that campuses have the resources they need to provide academic and support services to students; work together to find efficiencies; and share resources wherever possible. Without regions, campuses risk continuing to do things 12 different ways. The regions were determined based on geography, programs and to a lesser extent student enrollment. Because of the population density on the shoreline, this region will inevitably remain the largest region. We received feedback from Middlesex Community College asking us to rethink their region and are doing so.

2. Will the writing of the substantive change plan be collaborative and inclusive?

Yes, after the submission of the proposal substantive change to NEASC. An Academic and Student Affairs Consolidation Committee is being formed to begin the second phase of planning focused on academic and student affairs. FAC representatives and other faculty as well as Student Advisory Committee representatives and administrators and staff will be asked to provide input into the writing of this document. Once the document is completed, it will be distributed widely and posted on the website.

3. Are similar changes planned for the four-year institutions in the future?

No. However, the state universities are part of the administrative consolidations as part of Students First including the areas of facilities, financial aid processing, fiscal affairs, human resources, institutional research and information technology.

4. Will legislative changes be necessary with the proposed consolidation?

Yes. State statutes will need to be revised in the spring legislative session to reflect the creation of a single college with 12 campuses. The bulk of the changes will be technical and conforming name changes throughout the higher education statutes to reflect the single college.

5. How long until changes are made?

The Board of Regents will act on this proposal at their December 14, 2017 meeting. If approved, the implementation planning will begin in earnest. Our accreditor, NEASC, expects a substantive change proposal in March of 2018. Although the process will inevitably take many years to complete, particularly the curriculum revisions, the anticipated consolidation date for the new single college is July 1, 2019.