February 11, 2022

Larry Schall, Ph.D.
President, New England Commission of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803-4514

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR APPROVAL OF CSCU SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Dear Dr. Schall,

I write to urge the Commission to support the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities’ (CSCU) substantive change proposal. For me, the reasoning is simple. Beyond its steadfast adherence to NECHE’s standards for accreditation, this merger has always been about using nationally recognized best practices to improve student success and equity. In academia, the best-performing institutions are those that are willing to innovate as external conditions change. Connecticut’s historical piecemeal approach to student success, where individual institutions took incremental steps, but systemic change was out of reach, yielded subpar results, with students of color falling disproportionately behind. It is not enough to try to protect and preserve the status quo.

The community college merger is the best way to ensure that needed reforms, among those reforms, most notably the Guided Pathways suite of policies, are done as a system, at scale, with all institutions sharing in the success. The Guided Pathways movement, helps more students to efficiently complete credentials, transfer, and attain jobs with value in the labor market, is foundational to the student success efforts in the CSCU system.

I was fortunate to spend years working toward the launch of CT State. It is a critical step that will put Connecticut in a position to be an academic innovator, where student success is at the center of every decision and will facilitate the fulfilling of the mission and commitment to the attainment of student learning outcomes in community colleges.

In short, empirical evidence shows that changes in institutional policies and practices increase student success, particularly for low income, first generation and students of color.

I ask the Commission to approve Connecticut’s submission and allow CT State to move forward.

Sincerely,

Jane Gates, Ph.D. Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs Emerita
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities