



**Connecticut State  
Colleges & Universities**

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Mark E. Ojakian  
*President*

October 5, 2020

The Honorable Ned Lamont, Governor  
Connecticut State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Lamont:

I write today to provide an update on the dire financial situation at Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU). Because of enrollment declines, fewer students in residence halls and on campuses, and unforeseen expenses, all related to COVID-19, our budgets are strained to dangerous levels, putting the financial health of CSCU institutions in critical condition. The community colleges in particular are facing reserves near zero. The Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) is considering all options for reductions in spending, but cutting alone will not solve this problem.

At the time the original spending plan was adopted, the BOR requested an update and any necessary revisions be presented to them again in October once a more accurate reflection of enrollment levels was realized. COVID-19 has, of course, caused significant harm to our financial outlook since then, and this week, the Finance Committee of the BOR will meet to begin the review under much different circumstances. Revisions are expected include details of across-the-board cuts at universities and colleges, including capturing \$2.5 million in savings from a recently-announced hiring freeze, a 2 percent reduction in non-salary budgets totaling \$1.1 million, a \$400,000 reduction in overtime expenses, and a \$500,000 reduction in part-time lecturers to reflect reduction in discretionary release time provided to fulltime faculty. Regional leadership at the community colleges as well as university presidents will recommend necessary technical adjustments as well as spending cuts, including an expected \$18.7 million reduction at the community colleges, and a \$3.3 million reduction at the state universities.

This year, unionized workers at CSCU received \$20 million in raises as mandated by the 2017 SEBAC agreement. I am pressing for current year concessions from the CSCU unions, which cannot be implemented without agreement. Furloughs are also being considered. A single furlough day would save \$1.7 million, including \$146,000 from managers and executives.

We are encouraged by your efforts to study staffing and retirement patterns with the Boston Consulting Group, and look forward to participating in this important effort. Evaluating workforce efficiency and organizational design to prepare the state for the significant number of anticipated retirements among state employees will allow the state as a whole and CSCU to emerge from this tough fiscal climate even stronger than before.

Even under these tough financial conditions, our colleges and universities are making strategic investments in certificate and degree programs to ensure we are poised to act as the engine that helps drive economic recovery into the future. We have been working closely with the Governor's Workforce Council

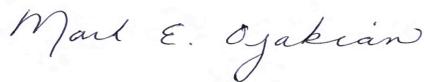
to identify activities that can take place in both the short and long term to improve the pipeline of students through college and university programs and into the workforce. Now more than ever, the transition to one college under Students First is critical to ensure we are operating in the most cost effective manner while not losing sight of our mission to provide the best education to our students and contribute to that essential workforce pipeline.

The Board of Regents will continue to focus on budget initiatives to produce savings in FY 2022 and our team will develop formal recommendations for further board action. But without additional state and federal funding, serious cuts threatening student-facing services and the long-term viability of our institutions will have to be considered.

In my most recent update to you, I indicated that shortfalls would likely exceed \$90 million for the year. Because of the reductions we have identified, that number is likely to be closer to \$70 million. I respectfully request that you support an appropriation in that amount to address our budget crisis. I am well aware of the significant financial trouble that the state is facing, and we do not take this request lightly. I assure you that CSCU is committed to our process of rebuilding a sustainable model for public higher education in Connecticut, but we desperately need help in building a bridge to take us beyond this troubled year.

I look forward to discussing these items with you, your staff, and our colleagues in the General Assembly. I believe strongly that we can find a way to come through this year stronger and more resilient than ever, provided we are willing to make the necessary sacrifices now. Thank you for your consideration and your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark E. Ojakian".

Mark E. Ojakian  
President, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities