

**THIS WEEK'S POLL:** Reorganization: For or Against?



# Union News

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## Higher Ed Reorganization Announced

Governor Dannel Malloy announced his [plan to reorganize higher education](#) this week, consolidating the central offices at CSU and the Community-Technical Colleges along with management at the Department of Higher Education and Charter Oak College into one office reporting to one CEO. The plan also calls for the creation of one board to oversee CSU, community colleges, Charter Oak, and the Board of Governors for Higher Ed. It appears that UConn would not be affected.

While few details of the plan have been announced, the Governor's press release clearly states that they are not closing or combining any of the campuses. Our lobbyist believes that they will not be merging any of the bargaining units.

**There will be a public hearing on the reorganization proposal on March 10.** CSU-AAUP will send out more information about this hearing as it becomes available.

CSU-AAUP will be monitoring this issue very closely. Once additional details unfold (most likely as part of the Governor's budget proposal on February 16) we will begin to formulate a response to the plan.

### **A Closer Look at Minnesota**

The Governor's press release likens the proposed reorganization to the current system in Minnesota (this does not mean the exact process or plan Minnesota used will be implemented here in Connecticut, but it is worthy of a closer look). Minnesota's plan to restructure higher education was passed in 1991 minutes before the legislative session ended and proposals to repeal the law were passed each year by the House (but not Senate) for the next three years. The new Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (called MnSCU and yes, the small "n" was

added so people didn't refer to the system as "miscue") was implemented in 1995. The question of why merge is not easily answered, but it seems to be due mostly to the difficulties faced by students transferring, competition between the institutions for the same pool of students, and funding inequities between the institutions.

The four years during the passage and implementation were difficult as financial resources for the merger were limited at first, there was great uncertainty, and there were also three Chancellors in that four year period. However, delaying the implementation gave the system an opportunity to have staff from the various systems participate on task forces and make policy recommendations to the Board. It also gave the system time to modify the legislation to avoid potential problems.

The System is set up as follows:

- A 15 member Board of Trustees. Trustees are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The board must include three students and a resident of each congressional district. The board has five committees: audit, educational policy, executive, finance/facilities policy, and personnel policy. The Board also employs a small staff. The Board not only appoints the Chancellor and Presidents but also all of the instructors and employees.

- The Chancellor and Central Office. The chancellor serves as chief administrative officer and has responsibility for a wide range of tasks related to system management, budgeting, and planning. The Central Office also employs three vice chancellors (academic and student affairs, finance, and human resources), and a central office staff of 325 employees.

- Institutions. There are currently 35 institutions, each with its own President, on 53 campuses.

Praise for the Merger:

- The merger has helped make it easier for students to transfer credits

- The merger contributed to improved financial oversight of institutions, the creation of 11 consolidated community and technical colleges, and improved working relationships among staff from various colleges and universities.

- MnSCU is the largest employer in state government and therefore has a lot of lobbying power.

### Criticisms of the Merger:

- MnSCU has implemented a uniform information system, but users at institutions still have concerns about the system's ability to meet their needs.
- MnSCU's overall direction and purpose have not been sufficiently clear.
- Poor relationships among MnSCU's board, central office, and institution presidents have adversely affected organizational cohesion and morale.
- MnSCU presidents have divided opinions about whether the net impact of the MnSCU merger has been positive or negative.
- There remains concerns among faculty about the quality of courses
- Some believe the merger only dilutes each system's functions
- Some of the faculty at the four-year institutions feel the merger advances a perception that the universities are little more than four-year vocational schools.
- Others have noted that the system's bureaucracy allows less local control, focusing on uniformity in policies instead.
- There is an inherent labor relations complexity in higher education that was largely ignored.
- **Cost savings failed to materialize; in fact, the merger was very expensive**
- It created a lot of confusion amongst the general public

For further reading and source material for the above, please see:

[The MnSCU Merger](#)

[Summary: the MnSCU Merger](#)

[Minnesota Public Radio ten year retrospect](#)

### **News Briefs**

- Louise Feroe Named Acting Chancellor of Connecticut State University System; Will Succeed Carter on March 1
- Richard Balducci has been acting as Board Chairman since the resignation of Chairman Karl Krapek became effective earlier this month
- [CSU-AAUP Political Committee Endorsements](#) for the special elections (February 22) have been posted on our website.

Have a question? Get the answer!

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