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Union News

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Changes at the BOR

President Gregory Gray & New Vision for ConnSCU

President Gray began his tenure at ConnSCU on July 1, 2013 and has recently outlined his plans for the future of the system. In a *Hartford Courant* article, "New Higher Education Chief Lays Out Broad Vision For Change," Dr. Gray states that he's working on a plan to raise the profiles of the institutions he oversees. The initial thoughts of his plan shared in the *Courant* include:

- Focusing on an academic specialty for each of the state's four state universities that would ideally raise their image as "centers of excellence" ((Engineering for CCSU, Liberal Arts for Eastern, Allied Health for Southern, and the Arts for Western)
- Sharpen the mission of the state's 12 community colleges to offer training for available jobs and expects the community colleges to also choose areas of focus so that the same programs aren't offered on every campus
- Increase enrollment at Charter Oak State College by reaching out to state residents who have a high school degree and some college credits. In addition, Gray said that he envisions Charter Oak as "the focal point for all distance education and online education in our system"

Dr. Gray also mentioned that he would gather feedback from all the stakeholders, including faculty, students, staff, legislators, and the business community, among others.

Other information shared in the article:

- Dr. Gray said he'll also be combing the budget for efficiencies, perhaps combining more administrative functions.
- He plans to expand private fundraising efforts.

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Changes at the BOR—Continued

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A special meeting of the Board of Regents was held on August 29 with the sole agenda item being a discussion of “ConnSCU future planning” (BOR Press Release: [Board of Regents Discuss a Plan for ConnSCU’s Future](#)). The meeting began with a presentation from Dr. James McCormick, a consultant from AGB Search, the company that ran the search for President Gray. Dr. McCormick is also Chancellor Emeritus of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System and Chancellor Emeritus of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and was involved in the reorganization and mergers that took place in both of those systems.

After a ten minute presentation, the Regents were given time for questions, but they mostly used the time for comments on the importance of using technology and how quickly they would like to see changes occur at ConnSCU. It was apparent that the majority of Regents who spoke believe the changes can’t occur soon enough. President Gray assured the Regents that he understands their sense of urgency, while recognizing the need for stakeholders to review and comment on the plan before it is implemented.

The meeting was recorded by CT-N and can be viewed [here](#). For additional information, please see the following:

[New Regents President Has Ambitions For Charter Oak College](#)
(Hartford Courant)

[A Note from President Gray](#)

BOR Chairman Lewis Robinson Resigns

Lewis Robinson, Jr. resigned as Chairman of the Board of Regents on August 1, and it was later revealed that Governor Malloy has requested his resignation. While Governor Malloy has been criticized in the press and by some prominent Republicans for this action, CSU-AAUP is supportive of appointing a new BOR Chair, preferably an individual who has a better understanding of public higher education in Connecticut and is willing to work with all of the BOR’s constituencies, especially the faculty, staff, and students of the ConnSCU institutions.

**Affordable Care
Act's Excise
("Cadillac") Tax on
Health Benefits**

SEBAC Attorney Dan Livingston prepared a memorandum to answer questions about how the health benefits excise tax which begins in 2018-- inaptly dubbed the "Cadillac tax" -- might impact state employee benefits. Please read the memorandum for more details, but the tax is not levied on employees, but on health plans or their sponsors (e.g. the State) and because our underlying pension and health care contract now extends through July 1, 2022, there is no way that such a tax, if it applied to Connecticut, can change that contract or reduce our benefits. Finally, the labor movement opposed this aspect of the Affordable Care Act because it wrongly equates decent health care with a luxury item that people can do without. Repeal of this tax is a major objective of the national labor movement and a large number of other progressive organizations because it could encourage employers to reduce health benefits as a way of avoiding this penalty.

**Julie Schmid
Named National
AAUP Executive
Director**

Reprinted from www.aaup.org

The AAUP is pleased to announce that Julie Schmid will join the Association as its executive director in October. The executive director, formerly called the general secretary, heads the national office staff.

Schmid is currently the chief of staff of AFT-Wisconsin, which represents higher education faculty as well as K-12 teachers and public employees throughout the state. She has worked for faculty unions around the country, including as coordinator for the Portland State University AAUP chapter and as an activist with COGS-UE Local 896, a union for graduate student employees at the University of Iowa, where Schmid earned her PhD. She served as a senior program officer in the AAUP's Department of Organizing and Services from 2002 to 2008.

For more information about Julie Schmidt, see the [AAUP's website](#).