



State of Connecticut

The Connecticut General Assembly

The Planning Commission for Higher Education

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Judith K. Resnick, Chairperson

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 9, 2014

3:00 p.m. Room 1E

The meeting was called to order at 3:11 p.m. by Judy Resnick.

The following commission members/designees/guests were present: E. Vagos Hadjimichael, Hedley Freake, David Walsh, Jason Jakubowski, Mary Lou Aleskie, Lois Schneider, John Bennett, Judy Resnick, John Schemo, Judy Goldfarb, Cynthia Lyon, Catherine Smith, Lindy Lee Gold, Dennis Murphy, Michael Gargano, Sally Reis, Pam Reid, Judy Greiman, Roberta Willis, Steve Cassano, Benjamin Barnes, and Kerry Kelley.

Members introduced themselves.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Judy Resnick refreshed the members' memory about the last meeting and the discussion regarding holding back the strategic plan report until after the election because we want whomever is elected to see this as something that is good for the state, good for the citizens of Connecticut, good for students but is not part of the political process. She went on to explain that there was a change of plans, which is why there was a draft copy given out to everyone. Judy explained that the contract that was signed with NCHEMS had very specific goals and very specific outcomes that were tied to dates, and the date for the strategic plan was September so we could not formally hold that off until November for NCHEMS to meet the conditions of the contract, so as a result, you have a draft report in front of you. Judy continued that while the Commission has gone through a lot of goals, they had not fleshed them out and that it had been the Commission's intent to do some more talking about a number of issues, the third goal in particular, affordability of higher education in Connecticut. She stated that this report is not cast in stone, this is subject to change, not the goals, but if there are things in here we have not discussed, we intend to. Judy said that the mission today is to begin to get at that flesh of that third goal that we

have not had a chance to do and that we will get to the 'what' and 'how' we do this, what's important today is to really get to that third goal.

Aims McGuinness started NCHEMS' presentation.

Dennis Jones continued NCHEMS' presentation.

Benjamin Barnes discussed affordability and acknowledged that is a real issue. He pointed out that making increases in funding for higher education comes at the expense of either money in people's pockets or money for economic development or health care or money for any of the other things we do. He continued that we do need a way to discuss those things in terms of how are we getting to our goals, how are we taking the resources that we think should be available to put toward achieving our goals and how can we best utilize those to get there. Secretary Barnes indicated that is a much more productive discussion than someone saying that you have to put in that much money in, or we're increasing tuition.

Dennis Jones continued the presentation.

Aims McGuinness added to the presentation.

Dennis Jones continued the presentation.

Jason Jakubowski said that they seem to be separating the community colleges and state universities.

Aims McGuinness indicated that there are a number of systems in the country that are organized exactly how ConnSCU is organized, and that's a good thing. He went on to say that within those systems they are making sure that the community colleges are funded in a way that deals with workforce issues and the universities are funded in a way that they can deal with the issues they are dealing with. Aims continued that the funding mechanisms reflect the differences in mission but that this is not a change in governance. He went on to say that there needs to be a funding system that reflects the unique role and mission of the community colleges.

Jason Jakubowski stated that the only other thing he would add is that Charter Oak has to be figured into this because it does not fit cleanly in ConnSCU and with the Governor's "*Go Back to Get Ahead*" initiative their enrollment has jumped significantly this semester over last year at this time. He continued that the state has had a problem with the issue of fitting in Charter Oak since 1973.

Dennis Jones shared that the Commission can't get where they want to go without the kind of alternative delivery Charter Oak provides, particularly for adults. Dennis continued with NCHEMS' presentation.

Lindy Lee Gold does not want to lose the idea of forgiveness, after-the-fact, or some sort of incentivization for remaining in the state, and completion of graduation, forgiveness over some period of time as a tool.

Dennis Jones stated that the [Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education](#) has done a lot of work regarding that subject and one of the things they found is that those programs have a very low success rate of keeping students in the state.

Roberta Willis let the commission members know that the Connecticut legislature looked at that subject a couple of years ago and that the issue became an administrative one of how you would follow people

in the program and how complicated it was. She continued that Connecticut didn't have an entity to do the reimbursement and to follow students.

Dennis Jones said that he thinks there are ways to create student financial aid programs that have more incentive built into them than most need based aid programs do. He continued that one of the things we don't have on the table is real world experience as part of the educational program, particularly for students in the occupational technical fields in community colleges. We need to look at a form of financial aid that looks like work study where students can get a paycheck as well as academic credit for work. Dennis stated this need to be done in the private sector as well as where work study is now in the public sector. He said there are various ways to pay for this, including tax credits. Dennis stated that opening up the discussion about how one deals with making more co-op education available, particularly for low income students, needs more attention.

Aims McGuinness underscored what Lindy said, that at the regional forums there was a lot of concern about people being able to afford to be able to stay here to get jobs. He went on to say that one of the lessons is that if you get students engaged in community service it has a major effect of getting them connected to want to stay. He continued that one of the things we need to address is what are the incentives and support necessary for more institutions to get a larger percent of their students to engage in that type of activity. Aims shared that there is a lot of interest from several of the universities we visited in this.

Dennis Jones commented that the notion of setting a target of saying we will develop a plan like this over the next year or so brings a set of people to the table to work on this that need to be at the table talking about the long run financing of higher education in the state. He went on to say that one of the questions always is, at the end of the day if we continue to do business as usual, even if we improve productivity in the institutions where it's not as high as it needs to be, we will still say – we can't afford that given the numbers we are trying to reach. So then, what is the role of alternative delivery methods and systems, and can that help square the circle we're trying to deal with.

Catherine Smith asked what Dennis and Aims see as the role of the institutions bubbling up their good ideas, innovations and plans vs. what NCHEMS laid out, which is pretty top down in nature. She went on to say that she sits on the Board of Regents and that Transform has a lot of good work being done that will dramatically change the way education is delivered and meet a lot of the metrics in this. Commissioner Smith said it's hard for her to understand how NCHEMS is thinking of the top down meeting the bottom up.

Dennis Jones stated that they have had that conversation with Mike (Gargano) and President Gray and others and they are talking about a very over-arching set of goals and trying to create an environment in which the institutional things can in fact work. He went on to say that one of the things they systematically tried not to do was to tell the systems how to do their business. Dennis said that there will always be the question of – if these are the targets, how do we get there, and at some point there is the question of – what are the resources that we can make available for them to get there, and in all of this what we are really trying to suggest is that this can't be done if you look only at the state appropriations to institutions, that you have to get all the money on the table from all sources and then say how do we keep it affordable to the payers at the same time we maximize the resources available to do the work. He continued that this is one area where he spent 45 years working at these kinds of things and knows for a certainty that working on one aspect of this at a time doesn't get us there.

Catherine Smith said that she understands that, the question is how would you see that work being either a party to or coming before the legislature and the executive branch and say this is what we recommend you do for investments. She continued that what she read in the plan feels more top down, we are going to tell you what we want you to invest in as opposed to in this case a very comprehensive study that's going to tell us what we should invest in from the bottom up. Commissioner Smith asked Dennis if he saw those two meeting.

Dennis Jones replied that the answer is yes, they have to. Dennis went on to say that presidents of systems will always go to legislatures and say this is what we need to invest in, that's the nature of the beast, but it's also true that there needs to be a place where the conversation can go on regarding where to invest to keep in line with the goals we are trying to reach. He said we are trying to create the kind of environment where that kind of conversation can happen.

Aims McGuinness said that Commissioner Smith's question was good because that is exactly why we started with the difference between what and how, and why in all these conversations we tried to say please don't get down to the weeds of things that are really appropriate for the Board of Regents or for UCONN. Aims stated that is not the role of this commission, the role of the commission is to provide an overall policy framework within which those institutions can set their own goals, but a lot of the issues we've outlined fall between the cracks at the institutions and nobody is dealing with them, there's no venue to deal with the problems that overlap adult ed, workforce, the community colleges and a set of other things that fall between the cracks, and those have to be dealt with in some strategic way, but in some ways the question you just asked needs to be asked at every meeting, don't get into things that are going to be a top down mandate, that in fact will interfere with the governing role of the institutions, it should be just the reverse. Aims said that the goals of the 20/20 plan sync very well with this and they are complementary. He said they are not exactly the same words, but that doesn't matter.

Sally Reis said that she agrees with the goals, but has some concerns about the way the plan was written and feels in a lot of ways the issue of the uniqueness of some of the missions of the institutions are not being completely understood or at least elaborated upon. She went on to say that if you asked UCONN if they met every goal the legislature has set out for them, the answer is yes and to say that they are not contributing overall to the goals is not accurate, but she understands that there are different goals for different institutions and what we want to try to do is to work in a complementary way, not a competitive way. Sally said she does not agree with one of the notions that was stated in the report that they are competing for resources right now, she thinks they are coming in at different times to the legislature and having conversations about what's important to us and working together better than we ever have before.

Aims McGuinness said that one of the realities that they are experiencing is right now is probably what they've experienced 49 other times, that when you raise the difficult questions of long term goals people take these as criticisms and we spend about 400 times saying guys, these goals came out of conversations with you, they are in fact very much what you are already working on, in fact UCONN is very much committed to that and the goals for the system are very much along these lines as well as the independent sector, in fact the goals of the department are very much aligned that way, the Governor's goals in fact are very much aligned with these points. Aims asked if we could not come together and agree that we are together on this and this is not different, the language may be different and if the language could be improved to make sure that it reinforces the complementary working together, let's work together to make it that way so it doesn't look like it's something different but it in fact draws people together. He continued that everyone is working together on the same thing, we want a framework that brings that together.

Dennis Jones said the reality is that the 37 strands of work Commissioner Smith referred to really are in place of these goals, not in pursuit of 37 strands of work, so the whole question then of which of those makes the biggest contribution to the goals is a question because you can't afford to do everything every year, so the question is what steps do you take, consistent with the goals, consistent with institutional missions and consistent with what you have bubbling up. Dennis asked if we can come to the overlap and understanding of that.

Catherine Smith stated that her point is that she doesn't think it should be an entirely top down process because we will lose the really great knowledge of what's on the ground and what's working and not working. She continued that's not to say that what all the institutions are doing shouldn't be measured and monitored and that there couldn't be some good ideas that come from the top down, but she did not see that in the process that NCHEMS put before the Commission, that she feels is an important element.

Dennis Jones replied, point well taken and continued with NCHEMS' presentation.

Aims McGuinness added to the presentation.

Dennis Jones continued with the presentation.

Lindy Lee Gold suggested that they keep in mind that the demographics of our community college students may in fact be a little different and that these are primarily people with other responsibilities and families and not necessarily but possibly minimum wage earners. She went on to say that she thinks the formula would have to be very complicated.

Dennis Jones said that the formula is adjusted for those circumstances. He said that it is adjusted for dependent vs. independent students and is why they put a 'learn and earn' notion on the table, work study or something like that.

Aims McGuinness continued with the presentation and asked if there were any other issues the commission members might have.

David Walsh asked Secretary Barnes if the real political situation is that for the last 20 years, as a proportion of the budget, higher education has been losing steadily, it isn't really a matter of asking the state to infuse huge amounts of money or having unrealistic expectations but it's possibly asking them to stop the slide or if not that to look more carefully at some of the major programs that the state has created. He went on to ask if anyone has looked at recent major building programs and asked if they moved us toward our goals, have they increased the percentage of people with degrees.

Benjamin Barnes replied that he does not have the numbers in front of him, but that he has no reason to question how David Walsh evaluated it. He went on to say that the slide is true for everything except for health care, which has grown at twice the rate of the growth in state government for decades and so it has crowded out other things, it's a mathematical fact, not a reflection of the State's commitment. Secretary Barnes went on to address David Walsh's comment about looking at capitol expenses made for higher education through the lens 'do those support and further our most fundamental goals', he absolutely thinks we should and believes that we do need to replace dormitories that are falling apart, provide reasonably new facilities for various departments in the state and go about orderly replacement

of our assets. He went on to say that follows basic state support for the institution rather than to specifically address shortcomings although they are related.

Dennis Jones stated that to Secretary Barnes' point that one of the hardest things to do is to make asset maintenance, regardless of what kind of asset, a decision package at the state level when new assets are much more amenable to that conversation, it's easier to have a conversation about a new building on a campus than it is about fixing the roof on an existing building so how one structures the base part of the budget so that gets handled can be done by making it part of the operations of the institution rather than something that the state always has to deal with as a capital item.

Vagos Hadjimichael asked for an explanation regarding increase productivity. He went on to say that that statement appears on more than one of NCHEMS' slides in the presentation, and he assumes it means reduce the cost to educate a student, but what exactly is their idea.

Dennis Jones replied that simply calculated the metric that NCHEMS used is how many degrees relative to either 100 FTE students to how many degrees per hundred FTE enrollments or how many students per hundred thousand dollar of expenditure or investment. Dennis went on to say that when you look at the comparative public statistics, UCONN is right up there as far as its productivity, not so true in the community colleges, but it's also true in the state universities and when NCHEMS runs out the calculations the ability to get more graduates out of the population you already have is about the only way you are going to get to 70%, you can't keep completion rates at the rate that they currently are, there aren't enough inputs in new students to do business as usual and get enough graduates to make it work, so the attention to retention and graduation are a crucial part of this whole agenda.

Pam Reid commented that going off Dennis Jones' idea of financial aid and productivity she asked if NCHEMS has some examples they can show. Pam commented that she's lived in states where they leverage their resources and incentivize private/public institutional collaboration/cooperation. She commented that she hasn't seen much on that in Connecticut.

Dennis Jones replied that is one of those areas that NCHEMS talks about, for example, regional and community development, there are ways to invest in programs that bring all the intuitions in a region together, public and private, to do some things and those are some of the notions lying behind the funding for that piece of the investment strategy that we talked about and is a possibility in that arena. Dennis said that outcome based or performance funding isn't going to change the world as a technical devise but one of the things that it does is provide a tool for a good president to do some things that they know they need to do. Dennis shared TN as an example. They have a very aggressive outcome based funding model but when you take a look and there are institutions that took the notion that we have incentives to produce more degrees and graduates and to be more productive with the students we have that did things that are good educational practices and the outcome based funding model gave a very good president and a very good provost cover to make some changes inside the institution that would have been very hard without that.

Benjamin Barnes shared that it's important to remember that we're not getting rid of the constitutional arrangements here in the State of Connecticut, there is going to continue to be a budget proposed by the Governor that will be acted on by the legislature, there will continue to be institutions of higher education making their opinions known to the Governor and to the legislature and being involved in the process and so to the extent that there is any group who begins to take on an advisory role it ultimately will be advisory so in some respects he doesn't think it's likely that this group or any group is going to be empowered to make decisions that currently the Governor and the General Assembly have the authority

to make. Secretary Barnes continued to say that he sees the notion of a group where people come together and talk through how are their respective efforts working toward achieving these goals and how can they work together better to accomplish those goals isn't necessarily in conflict with CSUS or UCONN undertaking their plans and doesn't see this as preempting the ability of the established organizations from doing what they plan to do.

Judy Resnick commented that she agrees. She stated that if one thing they have done in creating these goals, hopefully that people can agree on, is that we do agree on these three things, we need more people, we need to reduce the achievement gap and we need to find an effective way to finance it. She continued say that was all this group was trying to do, but more importantly to create somebody whose job it is to worry about that. Judy stated it was never intended to tell the institutions what to do. She respectfully disagreed with comments made about no competition for resources in the state because there are fewer and fewer dollars available. The hope is that by looking at a viable financing methodology is that when we come for resources they are aligned.

Sally Reis commented that she was referring to a line in the report that stated institutions have every incentive to compete and not collaborate.

Judy Resnick took back her comments.

Dennis Jones picked up on the comments and asked for an email to be sent because the question that they are trying to get at is – what can happen at the state level that creates an environment that fosters more of that, and what is there that needs to go away, what is there that needs to proactive – because what that does is use the educational assets of the state in a more productive way than they currently are.

Aims McGuinness shared that the underlying theme of what they've heard is good things going on, but no sustained commitment to them. Aims asked the commission members to provide feedback. He continued that at the next meeting the discussion will not involve structure.

Judy Resnick said that the next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 14th at 3:00 p.m. in room 1E of the Legislative Office Building, and encouraged members to share their thoughts via email as Aims suggested.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.