



March 12, 2024

Dr. Zulma Toro  
President  
Central Connecticut State University  
1615 Stanley Street  
New Britain, CT 06050-4010

Dear President Toro:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 1, 2024, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Central Connecticut State University and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Central Connecticut State University be accepted;

that the University submit a report by January 15, 2026, for consideration in Spring 2026 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in achieving its enrollment goals;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2028 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2028 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's continued success in achieving its enrollment goals as well as its success in:

1. implementing its plans, including its Strategic Plan 2030, Strategic Recruitment and Enrollment Plan, and Action Plan to Change CCSU Campus Culture;
2. implementing its plans to close the achievement gap for students of color;
3. ensuring its financial stability.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Central Connecticut State University was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of May 22, 2019, and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Central Connecticut State University (Central or CCSU) for its comprehensive, reflective interim report. We appreciate Central's continued commitment to "providing a quality affordable education" while attending to the "personal and social growth" of its students. The Commission is gratified to learn of CCSU's inclusive strategic planning effort that resulted in the Strategic Plan 2030 – Changing Lives, Building Communities; Central to Connecticut (SP2030) – that has five overarching goals, which are, in turn, supported by objectives, strategies, and key activities. The Commission notes positively the "reimagin[ing]" of the University's first-year experience program that resulted in "a more comprehensive and meaningful experience for students." CCSU also created an Associate Vice President for Community Engagement and Experiential Learning position that will focus on improving students' experiences at the institution. We understand that CCSU was removed from Title IV Provisional Eligibility Status in 2019 and has had zero audit findings since that time. The Commission further acknowledges that financial literacy education is provided at orientation and included in the First Year Experience Program. Lastly, the Commission is pleased to learn of Central Connecticut State University's plans to develop a health college that will include a free health clinic to support the local community.

The Commission further commends CCSU faculty and staff for their success in developing a culture of assessment that focuses on understanding and improving student learning. We are gratified to learn of the efforts by over 125 full-time faculty to assess the University's General Education outcomes using student artifacts collected from graded assignments focusing on first-year and senior students. We appreciate that assessment efforts have resulted in a better understanding of student learning at the institution as well as increased clarity of assignments and expectations for students. The Commission notes with favor Central's plans to disaggregate the data from these assessments going forward. We also understand that program review is completed on a five-year cycle and includes an internal peer review using a common template developed by the Academic Assessment Committee which then uses a "multifaceted rubric" to evaluate each report. The Commission also commends Central Connecticut State University for its efforts to understand student engagement and campus climate through a range of student, alumni, and employee surveys.

The item the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2026 is related to our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*.

The Commission understands that Central Connecticut State University's Fall 2022 enrollment was 9,468 students, a 15.1% decline from Fall 2019. This resulted in "unprecedented" revenue declines that necessitated "multiple permanent reductions" totaling \$13.1 million. We appreciate, therefore, the College's recognition that "maintaining enrollment levels is key." Efforts to address the enrollment decline include the creation of a Division of Enrollment Management, a faculty and staff retention and graduation rate summit, and a task force which reviewed Central's admission's processes and developed 42 recommendations, many of which have either been implemented or are in progress. The Commission notes favorably that the Fall 2023 new student enrollment is expected to exceed 1,400 students and retention is anticipated to exceed 80%, which would put CCSU "back on track" toward its normal enrollment pattern. As guided by our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*, we look forward to learning, through the Spring 2026 report, of Central's success in achieving its enrollment goals:

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve (*Students*, Statement of the Standard).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution's academic program, including specifically recruited populations. The

institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (5.6).

The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support (7.5).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2028 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The University is asked, in the Fall 2028 self-study, to give emphasis to its continued success in achieving its enrollment goals. The Commission recognizes that this matter does not lend itself to rapid resolution and will require the institution's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the self-study. The additional items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Educational Effectiveness*, and *Institutional Resources*.

Over the past several years, Central Connecticut State University has developed and is implementing a number of campus-wide plans. We appreciate, as noted above, the development of CCSU's newest strategic plan, SP2030. Implementation of SP2030 is underway with an Action Plan guiding progress towards the plan's goals. In addition, a Strategic Recruitment and Enrollment Plan is being developed to provide a "roadmap" for the University's student recruitment goals. The University also developed an Action Plan to Change CCSU Campus Culture that is designed to "improve campus culture and prioritize integrity." The self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2028 comprehensive evaluation will provide an opportunity for Central to update the Commission on its "demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5)." We are further informed here by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

The Commission notes with favor Central's "long-running" retention and graduation rate study which disaggregates first-time/full-time and full-time transfer cohorts by gender, race/ethnicity, and school. The University also monitors and analyzes six-year graduation rate equity gaps between White and Black students (7.7% for the 2016 cohort) and between White and Hispanic/Latino students (8% for the 2016 cohort). We welcome further information, as part of the Fall 2028 self-study, regarding Central Connecticut State University's success in closing the achievement gap for its students of color. Our standard on *Educational Effectiveness* provides guidance here:

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website (8.6).

We appreciate that Central Connecticut State University has maintained its fiscal stability and a balanced budget despite the enrollment challenges noted above. The Commission understands that state appropriations have not kept up with cost drivers such as fringe benefits, and we note

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that one-time funds from the State will decrease beginning in FY2025. CCSU also reports that the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System Office may adjust the funding formula for the four state universities, which could negatively impact Central Connecticut State University. As informed by our standard on *Institutional Resources* (cited above and below), we seek assurance, through the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2028 comprehensive evaluation, of the institution's success in ensuring its financial stability:

The institution's multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students (7.6).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Central Connecticut State University and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to JoAnn Ryan and Terrence Chang. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Russell Carey

cc: JoAnn Ryan  
Terrence Chang

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions