



February 19, 2021

Dear CCSNH Community,

I write with an update on the Governor's proposal to bring CCSNH and USNH together under a single board of trustees.

House Bill 2, which is the bill that includes the relevant language creating the single board, has not yet been released but is expected in the next few days. I have not seen this language yet, but our understanding is that it would replace the current boards of CCSNH and USNH, establishing a single board comprised of an equal number of current CCSNH and USNH board members (five from each), plus five new members not presently affiliated with either system, plus an unknown number of ex-officio members. This new board would be charged with overseeing the systems.

We have been asked if this proposal came as a surprise to CCSNH. The answer is yes and no. CCSNH was aware beginning last summer that the Governor was interested in deeper collaboration between the two systems and even potentially combining them, and that the USNH board had supported this concept. At the time, our Board's response was threefold:

1. If this is contemplated to be the first step toward deeper integration, we expressed concern about taking such a step without first conducting some research and groundwork to help us understand more about the various areas that could be affected, such as student pathways, accreditation, finances, operations, employment and more.
2. We recommended, while remaining separately governed systems, engaging in a study to identify key workstream areas and begin to answer those questions.
3. In lieu of taking this step to change higher ed governance, we engaged in operationally-oriented "synergies" work with USNH to collaborate in areas such as IT platform and contracts, procurement, and more. Our thinking was that this work, while stopping short of bringing the systems under one board, could achieve some if not many of the desired objectives of closer collaboration.

Now there is a proposal before the Legislature. We go into this phase with an open mind. Clearly, higher education is and has been in a period of change. This is why within CCSNH we have been working on shared services, shared programs, and collaborative strategic and financial planning. We have achieved a considerable amount of internal collaboration, which I see as important to our future.

Yesterday at a meeting of our board of trustees, the Governor spent more than an hour with us explaining his goals and the thinking behind his proposal. His vision is for seamless movement of students among institutions, an array of pathways and options, preservation of institutional brands and identities, and institutions that collaborate under a single governing body to efficiently support New Hampshire's educational needs. I see the wisdom in exploring possibilities. At the same time, I would hope for a careful discussion of the many questions raised by this proposal, and in our upcoming work with legislators I will ask for that level of focus and inquiry.



As you know, we have offered a survey for CCSNH employees and stakeholders to share their thoughts and questions. Your input is already figuring into our conversations, and I thank you for your participation.

A couple of responses in the survey questioned whether the classification and compensation study underway within CCSNH is related to “single system” conversations, and I can say unequivocally the answer to that is no. The C&C study had been under consideration for several years and is important to aligning positions within CCSNH. I still feel it will be helpful to us for all the reasons outlined since the study began.

As for next steps, we will continue to read the survey responses as they come in. On Feb. 26, along with representatives from USNH, we will discuss the proposal with members of the House Finance Committee. Of course you are also welcome to communicate directly with elected officials – this is New Hampshire, and that is part of the process.

As more information becomes available, we will make sure to keep you updated.

CCSNH stands apart in our dedication to our communities, and I deeply appreciate your continued focus on the important work that you do every day on behalf of our students and the state of NH.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan D. Huard".

Susan D. Huard

Interim Chancellor

Community College System of NH