



March 5, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I write with updates on recent developments related to the proposed creation of a single board for CCSNH and USNH.

Legislative Update

No formal steps or hearings have been held since last Friday's session with House Finance Division II. You can see what CCSNH presented and listen to a recording of the sessions [here](#) (scroll down to 2/26/21).

We will have another session with House Finance committee members next week, to focus on each system's financial sustainability strategies. For CCSNH this will mean talking about the incremental adjustments we have made and plan to continue to make, such as shared services, courses and programs; common use of resources such as Banner and Canvas; and budgeting practices that are fiscally responsible, conservative in nature, and always looking toward the future.

I also understand that a small subcommittee of House Education committee members will be working with us and USNH to provide an education committee lens on the merger proposal, and we look forward to working with those individuals as well.

House Bill 2

House Bill 2 has been released, and you can read it [here](#). It includes provisions that affect many agencies and programs. The merger language begins on page 60.

The steps that HB2 outlines for CCSNH and USNH include the creation of a single board, the repeal of the existing boards, the selection by the new board of a single chancellor for both systems, and directing the new, single board to develop legislation for the 2022 legislative session that would unify the systems by July 1, 2023. The language of HB2 also calls for this new board to "Take such action, consistent with the terms of RSA 187-A and 188-F, as may be necessary or desirable to effect the orderly and efficient operation of the community college system and the university system in anticipation of the unification of the 2 systems no later than July 1, 2023."

Fiscal Impact Statement

Bills that will have a fiscal impact on state, county or local revenues or expenditures use fiscal impact statements developed by the affected entities, and CCSNH has been asked to craft one for HB2. This is a challenging enterprise because it is not at all clear what the costs of implementation would be given that the only specific steps that have been identified relate to the creation and charge of the single board and selection of a chancellor. Additional changes beyond these are left to the new board to determine, so while there would be a fiscal impact from those changes, it is impossible to quantify. Therefore, the fiscal impact statement we draft will account for what this instruction could mean, and it will be largely speculative out of necessity.



Transfer and Accreditation Complexities

Governor Sununu has focused on the need for seamless transfer within the two public systems, making a compelling argument for a relatively straightforward goal that, at face value, offers clear benefits to students. Those of us in education, however, are very familiar with the inherent complexities: while areas of study in the same field appear similar, they often differ in how they fit within a program progression and how they support particular career paths. A reason we have numerous articulation agreements in place is because each agreement addresses these nuances. Frankly, we haven't done the best job explaining this to external audiences.

It can be hard for external audiences to understand the intricacies of transfer, and the role played by institutional accreditation. Accreditation is the major road map to and for sustaining academic quality. It is the assurance that colleges are preparing students to meet their goals and that they are continually planning, evaluating, and improving. Accreditation also defines the relationships of colleges, and herein is the challenge. How each college evaluates a course or a program is bound within its own academic policies and accreditation, including specialty accreditations such as those associated with engineering, business, nursing etc. These complexities make a blended path of courses from the home institution and from other institutions a challenge to maneuver. We as educators need to re-examine how we speak with students and families about transfer.

CCSNH Stakeholder Feedback

Many of you have provided feedback in the survey on the CCSNH website. I have asked an external third party to look over the responses and create a report that aggregates the feedback in general terms, calls out themes that run through the responses, and captures the types of questions you are asking. We are doing it this way in order to honor the spirit of the request itself, which was to provide a way for our community to candidly provide feedback that will help us understand how you see this proposal, advance the questions you have raised, and highlight the opportunities you see.

Making Sense of COVID-19 Symposium

Unrelated to the merger conversations, I absolutely must commend all those within CCSNH who were involved in last week's "Making Sense of COVID-19" symposium, as well as the leadership of Leslie Barber. This was a truly inspiring display of student scholarship and excellence, and a demonstration of the amazing effect our faculty have on their students. The feedback from this event has been overwhelming, and it makes me feel so very good about the work we do and the caliber of work our students demonstrate. Kudos, and thank you to all involved.

And finally, I am heartened by progress made in getting NH's population vaccinated. Along with some signs of spring, it feels good to look forward to a time when we can begin to live and work more "normally," and interact with one another in person again.

Sincerely,

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

Susan D. Huard
Interim Chancellor
Community College System of NH