



March 29, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I have important developments to share with you about the proposal to merge CCSNH and USNH under a single board.

On Tuesday of last week, House Finance Division II voted unanimously to replace the original higher education merger language in the proposed budget with new language that would establish a commission to provide additional time and a forum to explore a myriad of questions deemed important to the higher education landscape and to what a merger would look like. The commission would include four people drawn from CCSNH, including the board chair and chancellor, four from USNH, including board chair and chief administrator (as USNH currently does not have a chancellor) and three appointed by the Governor. This commission would be tasked with determining whether to recommend a merger of the two systems and if so, to develop statutory changes to bring back to the Legislature next year to achieve it. The amendment includes funding for external support to formally explore in greater depth the issues involved in merging two higher education systems.

The committee also voted to increase funding to higher education in the upcoming biennium, so that the system would be flat-funded in both years rather than receive decreased funding in year two. And instead of combining the appropriations for CCSNH and USNH in year two of the biennium, the appropriations would remain separate. This week the full House Finance Committee will consider the amended language from Division II and develop a full budget to present to the House. The version approved by the House will then cross over to the Senate for the next phase of the state budget process.

The questions many of you raised, and your observations on both sides of the question, were shared with legislators in the survey summary we provided and helped inform our conversations in hearings and work sessions. I believe Legislators are looking at the two systems in terms of distinctive missions and structures, and many are recognizing the need to address questions in greater detail before implementing a solution that may not fit the institutions equally.

I look forward to seeing more signs of Spring this week, and I am hearing from more and more people who are receiving vaccinations – two promising signs that we can begin to return to greater normalcy in our operations and interactions. I will continue to keep you updated as the legislative process moves forward.

Sincerely,

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

Susan D. Huard
Interim Chancellor
Community College System of NH