

### *Standard III*

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## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE**

### **Description**

Connecticut State University System: The Board of Trustees (BOT) for the Connecticut State University System is responsible for the governance of the four universities under its jurisdiction: Central Connecticut State University (New Britain), Eastern Connecticut State University (Willimantic), Southern Connecticut State University (New Haven), and Western Connecticut State University (Danbury). The CSU system, in turn, is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Governors for Higher Education and its Department of Higher Education. The BOT determines the general policy of the University System, reviews and approves institutional budget requests, sets tuition and fees, and appoints the chancellor of the system and the university presidents.

The BOT is made up of fourteen members appointed by the governor and four members elected by the students, one from each of the constituent universities of the CSU system as specified by the Connecticut General Statutes. Members are guided by the Connecticut Code of Ethics for Public Officials. The BOT appoints university presidents, to whom it delegates a broad range of powers and responsibilities.

The division of authority between the CSU System Office and each campus is delineated in a number of places, including state statutes, the Trustees' Personnel Policies for Management and Confidential Professional personnel, the Board of Trustees' resolutions (compiled in the Board Policy Book), the annual letter of priorities from the chancellor to the individual university presidents, and long-standing practices. During the 1990s, a series of public acts gave the CSU System presidents authority in critical administrative areas (travel requests and expenses, purchase of all commodities and equipment, as well as certain contractual services, personal service agreements and honoraria, and the establishment of positions within budgetary allocations). Management positions are fitted into the System-wide management salary structure in order to promote pay equity across the System.

Western Connecticut State University: The president of the University is the chief executive officer of the institution. The current president, Dr. James R. Roach, was appointed September 18, 1992. WestConn is organized administratively into four divisions: Academic Affairs; Finance and Administration; Student Affairs; and Institutional Advancement. The day-to-day operations of the University are reviewed and discussed during weekly staff meetings with the President. The four vice presidents, the Dean of Human Resources, and the Executive Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs and Disability Services regularly attend these meetings.

During the academic year, the President meets several times a semester with the Cabinet, a much larger group, which includes the vice presidents, the Dean of Human Resources, the three School deans, the Dean of Graduate and External Programs, the Dean of Student Affairs, the Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Chief Information Officer, the Associate Vice President for Public Safety, the Director of Public Safety, the Director of University Libraries, the Enrollment Management Officer, the Director of Public Relations, and the Director of Grant Programs. The President may also seek advice from faculty and students: formally through the University Senate, Senate standing committees, and the Student Government Association; or informally from individuals. President Roach regularly holds open office hours on the Midtown and the Westside

campuses, when anyone may come to talk with him. During his tenure, the President has redefined positions and brought in a number of new people at the executive and administrative level.

Management and Director-Level Changes: The University's fifth-year report listed a number of changes and new appointments at the management level. Appointments since that time include a Vice President for Institutional Advancement (a new position; 1999), a Vice President for Student Affairs (2000), an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (a new position; 2002), a Dean of the Ansell School of Business (1999), a Dean of the School of Professional Studies (2001), a Dean of Arts and Sciences (2002), a Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs (a new position; 2002), and a Chief Information Officer (1998).

The fifth-year report addressed four areas of special emphasis at the request of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE): (1) Minority Recruiting and Retention; (2) Faculty Scholarship; (3) Part-time Faculty; and (4) Library and Information Technology. The advancement to Management level of the position of Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services relates to the first area, and that of the Chief Information Officer to the fourth. Two recent director-level appointments are also indicative of the University's commitment to address the areas of emphasis identified by the CIHE: a Director of Grant Programs (2001), supporting faculty scholarship, and an Associate Director of Library Services (2002).

Collective Bargaining: There are six bargaining units on the Western Connecticut State University campus: The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), State University Organization of Administrative Faculty (SUOAF), Administrative and Residual (A&R), Protective Services, Maintenance and Service Unit, and the Administrative Clerical Bargaining Unit.

**Academic Affairs:** The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) has overall responsibility for the entire area of academic affairs and for the total instructional program of the University, in accordance with established policy and the direction of the President. The VPAA is responsible for the administration, coordination and supervision of all academic personnel and related programs and services, including academic strategic planning and the coordination of institutional, regional, and state accreditation processes.

*Schools and Departments:* The University is organized into three Schools: the Ansell School of Business, the School of Arts and Sciences, and the School of Professional Studies, each of which has its own standards, retention criteria, and faculty. Each School is administered by an academic dean responsible to the VPAA. All graduate and undergraduate programs are offered through one of the three schools. The Ansell School of Business has five departments (Accounting, Finance, Management, Management Information Systems, and Marketing) and a division (Justice and Law Administration). Arts and Sciences, the largest of three Schools, is made up of thirteen departments: Art, Biology and Environmental Science, Chemistry, Communications and Theatre Arts, Computer Science, English, Foreign Languages and Literature, History and Non-Western Cultures, Mathematics, Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, Physics, Astronomy and Meteorology, Psychology, and Social Sciences. Professional Studies has five departments: Education and Educational Psychology, Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences, Music and Music Education, Nursing, and Social Work. Each academic department has a chairperson, the official spokesperson for department faculty.

*Curriculum Development:* Academic departments and their faculty have authority over the WestConn curriculum. Departments originate proposals and seek permission to proceed with planning through the University Planning and Budgeting Committee, which recommends to the President after review for compatibility with the University Strategic Plan and implications for

staffing, equipment, and facilities. With permission to proceed, departments complete proposals and submit them for approval by governance at the School, University, and management levels. New degree programs must go beyond the University to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors for Higher Education.

*Program Review:* CUCAS has the responsibility for conducting regular program reviews on a rotating ten-year basis. In addition, CUCAS, the University Senate, or any member of the administration may request CUCAS to review a program. Programs that undergo external review may use the external review guidelines in lieu of the internal guidelines. Reviews are submitted to the University President.

*Program Discontinuance:* A department, CUCAS, the Graduate Council, the University Senate, or the University President may initiate a recommendation for program discontinuance. The review procedure is complex, with emphasis on how the proposed discontinuance would affect students, faculty, and related programs. Provision is always made for completion of a program by students who have begun their coursework.

*Constituent Elements:* Other constituent elements of the Division of Academic Affairs and the standards in which they are addressed in greater detail are: the Office of Enrollment Management (Standard VI), the Registrar's Office (Standard VI), Media Services (Standard VII), Library Services (Standard VII), Institutional Research and Assessment (Standards III, IV, and VI), the Office of External Programs, and the Office of Grant Programs (Standards IV and V).

**Finance and Administration:** The Vice President for Finance and Administration (VPFA) has overall responsibility for the entire area of finance, as well as administrative offices serving the institution's students and faculty. Offices reporting to the VPFA include Public Safety, Fiscal Affairs, Institutional Services, University Computing, Planning and Engineering, University Events, and University Publications and Design.

**Student Affairs:** Student Affairs is the responsibility of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). The Dean of Student Affairs, who reports to the VPSA, is responsible for supervising, evaluating and coordinating areas such as Career Development and Placement, Counseling, Health Services, the Student Center, Student Judicial Affairs, and student organizations. Also included in the Division of Student Affairs are Athletics and Recreation, club sports, and intramurals.

**Institutional Advancement:** The Vice President for Institutional Advancement is responsible for public relations, all development activities with external agencies, organizations, and individuals, and alumni affairs.

**University Senate:** Established by the will of the faculty in 1968 and last reorganized in 1991, the University Senate is responsible for representing the general faculty (all professional employees except the president). Its membership is made up of teaching faculty, administrative faculty, representatives from management, and a representative from the Student Government Association. In the case of policies over which WestConn has autonomy, the approval of the University Senate is required. The University Senate also acts as a forum to discuss issues and to express its views through resolutions on any topic of concern to the faculty. The University Senate's authority, responsibility, and membership are described in the faculty handbook. The University Senate currently has 17 standing committees.

**Students and Shared Governance:** On matters that directly concern students, the President and the University Senate consult with members of the Student Government Association (SGA) and student

representatives on University Senate standing committees, University Senate *ad hoc* committees, and on the University Senate itself. The SGA is charged with initiating, coordinating, and integrating all activities of the student body and member campus organizations in the best interest of the entire student body. The SGA acts as the main voice of student opinion and serves as a liaison between students and the University administration.

The SGA is the governing body of student organizations at WestConn. SGA represents students on various University committees, serves as the voice of the student body, and establishes channels of communications within the student population. SGA develops and funds many campus activities, and also serves to help protect the rights and freedoms of individual students and student groups in academic and social matters. Consistent with state legislation and Board of Trustees policy, the University administration consults with the SGA regarding changes in student fees and charges. By statute, the University administration retains ultimate responsibility for expenditure of all fee revenues.

### **Appraisal**

Connecticut State University System: The Connecticut State University, as a public state university system, interacts with the state legislature, the executive branch, and the Board of Governors for Higher Education. The current system, though not without its problems, has on the whole functioned well.

The relationship between WestConn and its sister institutions within the system also functions well in an environment characterized by collegiality and collaboration. The relationship between WestConn and the CSU System Office is similar to that of its sister institutions, with occasional stresses and strains. For example, WestConn faculty and staff have not always agreed with System Office decisions on technology, such as the choice of course management software. The issues become more complex when the State government is also involved. For example, the CSU System's administrative software is SCT Banner. However, the State of Connecticut has recently moved to PeopleSoft, a decision that complicates matters for several areas of CSU administrative computing (payroll, accounts receivable and payable, for example). Online CSU runs distance education courses, an arrangement that has not been entirely satisfactory for faculty, staff, or students at the four universities.

Western Connecticut State University: President Roach's open and collegial style has greatly improved the morale of faculty and staff. In general, there is effective collaboration between faculty and the administration and that pattern can be expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The University strategic plan has created a comprehensive and workable structure for setting priorities and determining spending plans, though the state's current economic difficulties obviously create challenges. (For additional information, please see Standards III and IX).

WestConn faculty and administration are committed to a participatory governance system. Members of the University community show a consistent willingness to serve on University Senate committees. In the Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff survey, however, a substantial number of respondents did not agree that "WestConn's system of governance effectively accomplishes the mission and purposes of the University." Why the process is perceived this way may be related to communication issues, despite the widespread use of e-mail and a weekly newsletter, "WestConn Report."

Although students have many opportunities to be involved in governance, actual participation has been somewhat disappointing. For many reasons, most of them related to time conflicts (there is no

regularly scheduled “open” time) and other commitments, student representatives do not regularly attend meetings of University Senate standing committees.

The reorganization of the University Senate in 1991 resulted in better communication between departments and the Senate. The flow of information from the various committees and the University community has significantly improved through the increased use of the University’s computer network.

In 1998 the Senate initiated a complete review of committee bylaws. As a result, the focus of each committee has been clarified and redefined where necessary. There are no formally established procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the governance system, but when problems arise, they are brought before the Senate and resolved in a collegial manner.

The office of ombudsman, established in the late 1980s, continues to function. The ombudsman is responsible for resolving complaints not adequately addressed through normal university channels. There have been few appeals to the ombudsman recently, however. This may indicate that the formal mechanisms for resolving complaints have been working effectively and/or that not everyone is aware of the services available through that office.

The University’s governance structure and internal organization seem to have served the institution well. Changes have been made when necessary to improve governance in order to better fulfill the University’s mission. For example, at the executive and administrative level, new positions have been added gradually and existing positions redefined in ways that help to address needs and concerns. The position of Dean of Graduate and External Programs is a case in point. The new dean is working with the Graduate Council to develop new processes and procedures, and to revise existing ones that have not always run smoothly. Another example concerns the institution of the position of Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services. The University received pointed criticisms on diversity issues from the 1993 NEASC site team and from the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. For the last seven years, however, since the establishment of this position and the upgrading to management level, the University’s affirmative action plan has been approved by the Commission. Another example is the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, which has accelerated the University’s progress in putting into place procedures for the evaluation of institutional effectiveness, particularly of student learning outcomes. Finally, since the appointment of a Vice President for Institutional Advancement, the University’s endowment has grown significantly: from \$1.9M in 1999 to \$5.1M in 2002 (see Standard IX for additional information). Grant awards, which had fallen off during the years when there was no full-time grants officer, are steadily rising.

### **Projection**

WestConn is growing and maturing as a university. New programs, especially the addition of a doctoral level program in education (pending NEASC approval), are accelerating a process that began many years ago. The University will continue to evaluate and, where appropriate, revise internal governance structures.

Responses to the Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff Survey indicated a perception that communication among WestConn constituencies is less than ideal; the University community will need to work together to improve the situation. The sheer volume of print and electronic messages and reports may be part of the problem.

The Student Affairs Division will continue to work with the Academic Affairs Division to develop ways to improve student participation in governance, whether through improving the scheduling of committee meetings or by providing incentives to encourage student participation.