

Standard III

Organization and Governance

Description

Higher Education in Connecticut

The State of Connecticut has eighteen public institutions of higher education: the University of Connecticut, including its branches; the Connecticut State Universities (CSU), which include Central, Eastern, Southern, and Western Connecticut State Universities (Western); twelve Community Colleges; and Charter Oak College.

Until recently, a Board of Trustees (BOT) governed Western and its sister CSU campuses. In 2010, the Connecticut Legislature established a Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to replace the BOT, effective July 1, 2011 (see Appendix: Standard III: 1). The BOR formally replaced the BOT in January 2012 (see Appendix: Standard III: 2).

Board of Regents

[The BOR](#) governs seventeen Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (ConnSCU): Charter Oak State College (an on-line college), twelve Community Colleges, and the four CSUs (including Western). The powers and duties of the BOR are prescribed by statutes and further delineated in policies adopted by the BOR. The fifteen voting members of the BOR include nine gubernatorial appointees, four appointed by legislative leadership, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) to the BOR. The four non-voting BOR members are Commissioners of State agencies. BOR members and their competencies can be found on the BOR website (see Appendix: Standard III: 3). BOR members are required to adhere to the State of [Connecticut's Code of Ethics for Public Officials](#).

[The official duties of the BOR](#) include [establishing](#) tuition costs, student fees, and financial aid policies. The BOR reviews and approves new programs and, in conjunction with representatives from the ConnSCU campuses, conducts searches for Presidents of the individual campuses. In addition, the BOR is active in developing and coordinating policies for higher education in the State of Connecticut.

The BOR is charged with reviewing, approving and maintaining the individual missions of the ConnSCU campuses. The BOR requested Vision and Mission statements from all ConnSCU campuses to use when writing their own mission statement.

The BOR [meets regularly](#) in accordance with a schedule established and published on their website. Minutes of past meetings and additional information can also be found on the BOR website.

The BOR has a SAC and a Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) (1). One student from each of the ConnSCU campuses serves on the SAC (elected by their respective student government associations (SGA)). The FAC consists of seven faculty members elected by their respective Senates: three from the CSUs (with one alternate), three from the Community Colleges (with one alternate), and one from Charter Oak College (with one alternate).

The first President of the BOR, Dr. Robert A. Kennedy, [resigned](#) in October, 2012; Dr. Philip E. Austin, former President of the University of Connecticut, is currently serving as the [interim BOR President](#). A BOR Search Committee is in the process of conducting a [search for a new BOR President](#); a System-wide [Advisory Committee](#) consisting of thirty- six ConnSCU representatives is assisting in the search.

Since the BOR is so new, development and insurance of its own effectiveness has not been established.

Western Connecticut State University

Dr. James W. Schmotter has been the President and Chief Executive Officer of Western since August 1, 2004. He is the official spokesperson for the University on policy and other University matters and reports directly to the President of the BOR. Seven people report directly to the University President: the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, The Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Vice President for Institutional Advancement, the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, the Chief Information Officer (Information Technology & Innovation), and the Chief Diversity Officer in charge of Multicultural Affairs and Affirmative Action. The Faculty Handbook, revised annually, clearly describes the authority, responsibilities and relationships of the BOR and the administration, faculty and staff at Western (see Appendix: Standard III: 3).

A Risk Management Committee and Campus Emergency Team also report to the President to ensure that the institution's fiduciary responsibility is met.

New administrative hires include an Associate Vice Provost, four new permanent rather than interim Deans and a Director of Grants and Research.

Evaluating and monitoring Western's effectiveness is a [charge given to the BOR](#) in the Connecticut General Statutes. A yearly evaluation of Western's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was conducted by the BOT in the past. Part of this evaluation included an annual survey given to faculty and staff and Western that dealt with organizational and presidential effectiveness. It is expected that the BOR will continue this practice.

President (Chief Executive Officer): The President meets weekly with the Vice Presidents and the Associate Vice Presidents during the academic year. The President's Cabinet (composed of the Vice Presidents, the Academic Deans, the Dean of Students, the Chief Information Officer, the Director of Admissions, the Police Chief, the Director of Athletics, the Director of Affirmative Action and Multicultural Affairs, the Controller and the Director of Development) meets monthly. In addition, the President annually attends at least one faculty meeting of each School within the University, and he meets on an as-needed basis with the leadership of the Collective Bargaining Units within the University. The President also regularly seeks advice through attendance and engagement at many of the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC) and University Senate meetings.

The President interacts with students at club events, student performances and athletic events. He meets with the leadership of the SGA, the Pan Hellenic Council and the President's Athletic Advisory Council, which he established in 2005. All students are invited to attend monthly "Pizza with the President" focus group sessions; between twenty and sixty students usually attend each of these events.

Additionally, the President meets regularly with the Foundation Board, its Budget and Investment Committee, and the Alumni Association Board. He is readily accessible to all campus constituents via e-mail or personal appointments.

Upon arriving at Western, President Schmotter initiated steps that led to the formation of a Strategic Plan, the basis of planning at our University. In 2004-2005, the Values and Visions process (a series of interviews with representative constituents of the university) was accomplished; results were shared with the University community and analyzed by an Extended President's Advisory Committee and the UPBC. In 2005, five action teams were formed to focus on strategic enrollment management, student success, comparative advantage, summer and intersession activities, and community partnerships, respectively. In 2006, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (consisting of the co-chairs of the Action Teams) was formed to draft a Strategic Plan. After input from the university community, including discussions at the Student Government Association and the University Senate meetings, the Strategic Plan draft was revised and, on March 28, 2007, was unanimously endorsed by the University Senate. Major university decisions, including budget decisions and university hiring, are guided by the [Strategic Plan](#).

A Faculty-Staff survey was given in Spring 2012 to assess the perceptions of faculty and staff in a number of areas. A majority of faculty and staff believe that Western's vision and mission statements and strategic plan are used as a basis for priorities in staffing (74.5% and 64.2%, respectively), enrollment goals (79.6% and 73.3%), and planning for the future (89.8% and 83.1%, respectively) (see Appendix: Standard III: 4).

Division of Academic Affairs: [The Division of Academic Affairs](#) is headed by a Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) who serves as the Chief Academic and Executive Officer for the University. The Provost/VPAA integrates and coordinates the academic activities of the schools and departments and makes recommendations to the President. She is responsible for academic assessment, coordinating the academic activities of departments and schools within the university, supervising academic personnel, allocating resources, executing Western's strategic plan, implementing both quality assurance and university policies, serving as a student advocate, and promoting the university to the public. The Provost/VPAA is responsible for overseeing Media Services, Library Services, Institutional Research and Assessment, International Services, Sponsored Research and Administrative Services, the Advisement Center, Enrollment Management (Admissions, Registrar's Office, Student Financial Services), and External Programs; the latter two (Enrollment Management and External Programs) are under the purview of the Associate VPAA who reports directly to the Provost/VPAA.

The University is divided into four schools and one Division: the Ansell School of Business, the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Professional Studies, the School of Visual and Performing Arts, and the Division of Graduate and External Programs. Each school has its own Dean.

Through the Graduate Division, the University is authorized to award Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Health Education, and two Doctorate in Education degrees. All graduate programs have a Coordinator who reports to their respective School Dean.

Western has three external programs: two undergraduate degree-completing programs (Management and Nursing) and one master's degree (Health Administration) program offered in Waterbury, CT. The Associate VPAA oversees these programs.

Shared Governance: Western operates under an effective system of shared governance. Students, faculty, staff and administrators have multiple opportunities to express their opinions and contribute to decisions being made at the University through participation in or by attendance at committees, the University Senate and the SGA. Participation is possible at the BOR level through the SAC, FAC and attendance at BOR meetings.

The faculty at Western are represented by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). [The faculty contract](#) guarantees academic freedom and outlines the faculty's professional rights and responsibilities. The other campus bargaining units include State University Organization of Administrative Faculty, Administrative and Residual, Protective Services, Maintenance and Service Unit, and the Administrative Clerical Bargaining Unit.

Western has a University Senate (as opposed to a Faculty Senate). The University Senate represents all professional employees (except the President); it was established in 1968 and last reorganized in 1991. Senators include one faculty member from each academic department, one librarian, one counselor, two administrators (level I - VII), two representatives from the Deans and Vice Presidents (only one of whom is a voting member), and one representative of the SGA. All senators serve a two-year term and are either elected by their departments or serve on a rotational basis. Changes in policies at the university level are required to go through the Senate. In addition, the Senate serves as a forum for discussion of issues relating to the university. All Senate meetings are open meetings, and all professional employees at Western can raise issues or express concerns and opinions at the Senate. Senate resolutions that are passed are forwarded to the President of the University for approval. The Senate has two procedural committees (the Agenda and the Nominations and Election Committees) and seventeen standing committees. Committee membership is mixed (administrators, faculty and students), and most people serving on committees are elected to their positions. Through many of these committees (such as the Academic Leave Committee, the Assessment Committee, the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS), the Graduate Council, the Promotion and Tenure Committee, the Terminations and Appeals Committee, and the UPBC), faculty, staff and students participate in shared governance (see Appendix: Standard III: 5).

The University President, Provost/VPAA, and other Vice Presidents attend Senate on a regular basis. These administrative personnel provide information for and/or engage in discussion with Senators on activities and issues important to our University. They also use Senate to provide input and direction on like issues. The administration has sought Senate's help and guidance in forming key committees such as search committees, a Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP) initiated by the BOR, and Distance Learning.

Western's representatives to the BOR's FAC and SAC are either Western Senators or they attend the University Senate meetings on a regular basis. These representatives inform Senate of activities and issues occurring at the level of the BOR. They also serve as Western's voice to the BOR.

In February 1988, the University Senate established the position of Ombudsman in response to a recommendation of then President Dr. Roach. The Ombudsman is an AAUP member who is elected for a two-year term and can represent AAUP faculty, Administrative Faculty, and/or students.

Students participate in shared governance through the [SGA](#), their representative on the University Senate, service on eleven of the standing committees of the Senate, participation on some departmental committees, and their representative on the SAC. Students residing on campus also express their needs and concerns through the Residence Hall Council. A Vice President for Student Affairs and a Dean of Student Affairs are available to assist and guide students.

Curriculum and Programs: The CSU-AAUP (Connecticut State University - American Association of University Professors) [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) stipulates that the faculty within a department control the courses and curriculum of that department. Each school has its own curriculum committee, and there are two University-wide curriculum committees: CUCAS for undergraduate curriculum and the Graduate Council for graduate curriculum. At the May 2012 University Senate meeting, a resolution was passed making it easier for departments to make minor curriculum changes. For example, a change in the title of the course will now go directly from the department to the Provost/VPAA, thus bypassing the UPBC, the School Program Review Committee and the UPBC (see Appendix: Standard III: 6).

Many departments at Western offer distance education courses. Currently, a policy statement for such courses does not exist, but the Distance Education Committee is developing a [statement](#) for submission to the University Senate for discussion.

The [program review process](#) is detailed in the Faculty Handbook. [In 2007](#), it was established that all academic programs were to be reviewed every ten years. In Spring 2012, the time period of ten years was shortened to seven years; this change has been approved by CUCAS, the Graduate Council, the UPBC, the University Senate, and the President of Western (see Appendix: Standard III: 7). The President or a designee of the President can award reassigned time to faculty for activities related to program review. By May 1 of each year, the Provost/VPAA will announce which programs will be evaluated the following year. Departments that are undergoing program review meet with the Provost/VPAA to discuss the review process and then elect a Departmental Program Review Committee (DPRC); the DPRC can be composed of all faculty members or a subset of faculty in the department. The DPRC conducts and writes an internal review, including an action plan, based on the criteria listed in the Faculty Handbook. The DPRC recommends appropriate people to serve as external evaluators. The respective Dean, in consultation with the Provost/VPAA, selects a maximum of two external evaluators who read the self-study, conduct an on-site visit (if so requested), and write a report which is submitted to the respective Dean and the DPRC. If necessary, the DPRC revises their action plan based on the comments of the external evaluators and submits the revised plan to the Dean. After writing a summary statement, the Dean submits the self-study to the Provost/VPAA who reviews the material and forwards it to CUCAS (undergraduate programs) or the Graduate Council (graduate programs). These committees review the document and make recommendations to the Provost/VPAA who, in turn, makes recommendations to the DPRC and, if necessary, to the university community.

Program discontinuance can be initiated by a department (or departments if the program is interdisciplinary), CUCAS (undergraduate programs), the Graduate Council (graduate programs), the University Senate or the University President. If initiated by the department(s) or the President, the

request for discontinuance must be submitted in writing to CUCAS or the Graduate Council. CUCAS or the Graduate Council review the request and assess the effect of program discontinuance in terms of student impact, accreditation, certification, licensure, faculty positions, budget issues, and other programs. CUCAS or the Graduate Council sends its recommendation to the University Senate which, in turn, considers the issue. Within sixty days of the submission of the written request for program discontinuance, the University Senate sends its recommendation to the University President who, in turn, informs the University Senate and the BOR of his decision (see Appendix: Standard III: 8).

Programs that trend toward lowering enrollments can be evaluated according to procedures outlined in section 5.18 (Programmatic Adjustment and Redeployment) of the [CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement](#). This evaluation can be initiated by the President alone or by the President and the Curriculum Committee.

Appraisal

Board of Regents

BOR meetings are open meetings; this enables employees of ConnSCU to participate in shared governance at the BOR level. In addition, the BOR President routinely sends newsletters to ConnSCU employees. These newsletters help keep professional employees updated on BOR activities and key events important to our University.

There is currently no mechanism through which the efficacy of the BOR is assessed. This includes internal and external assessment. It is expected that this issue will be addressed in the near future.

Western Connecticut State University

A complete overview of academic governance at Western is outlined above (in Description) and in the [Faculty Handbook](#). The implementation of a Provost model in 2006 was a major structural change designed to support the Strategic Plan and to strengthen leadership on the academic side. It was imperative to place a greater focus on academics to undertake major transformation in ways to conduct teaching and learning, in the way it relates to external communities, and in the ways vice presidents relate to academic affairs. The Provost is the number two officer in the University. As chief academic officer, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs has demonstrated leadership in major initiatives such as accountability and assessment, student retention, early alert and intervention processes, automation of forms, prioritization of school goals and budget reallocation, integration of learning and technology with Smartboard in classrooms, and course redesign.

Shared governance works well at Western. Administrators and faculty engage and work together effectively for the benefit of our students and our University. Two members of the [University Senate](#) and the NEASC Standard III team attended a conference on shared governance held by the AAUP in October, 2011; both members were astonished at how smoothly the administration and faculty at Western work together in comparison to many other schools which we learned about at that conference. As an example of collegiality and shared governance between the Administration and the faculty, the President of Western signed all resolutions the University Senate sent him in the 2011-2012 academic year and all but one resolution sent to him in 2010-2011; these resolutions were varied and included (but not restricted to)

new and revised policies and procedures, the formation of review committees, the election of Western representatives to the BOR, and the approval of curricular matters.

In Spring 2012, President Schmotter invoked article 5.18 on “Programmatic Adjustment and Redeployment of Resources” of the [CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement](#). This article allows for assessment of programs with low enrollments. Two ad hoc committees were formed according to Article 5.18 guidelines in order to assess two low-enrolled graduate programs.

The May 2012 University Senate-approved changes in the approval process for minor curriculum changes should ease process hurdles for departments. In addition, this change will allow curriculum and budget committees more time to spend on major issues.

Program review will now occur every seven years rather than every ten years for both our graduate and undergraduate programs (see Appendix: Standard III: 7). This change will allow the University to identify program strengths and weaknesses sooner and to make the appropriate improvements in a shorter timeframe.

Western does not currently have a clear, written policy for distance education. However, the Distance Education Committee is working on a [draft policy](#).

Projection

Board of Regents

Western will continue to be affected by the replacement of the BOT by the BOR. Communication between our campus and the BOR is critical. Regular updates have been provided by the BOR, our Provost, our Administration, and Collective Bargaining Units; these updates are expected to continue. In addition, Western’s representatives to the BOR’s Faculty Advisory Committee and Student Advisory Committee will continue to regularly inform Senate of BOR activities and to serve as Western’s voice to the BOR.

It is also expected that a mechanism to assess the efficacy of the BOR will be developed. Such a mechanism will provide for accountability of the BOR to the ConnSCU campuses and to the State of Connecticut.

Western Connecticut State University

Shared governance at Western works well and is expected to continue in the future. The relationship between the administration, faculty and staff is positive and interactive, and through our University Senate and its committees, it is anticipated that a cooperative atmosphere will be retained.

New administrative hires are expected to generate new ideas and initiatives at Western. The Associate Vice Provost will enhance the ability of the Provost Office to lead academic pursuits at Western. Having four new permanent rather than interim Deans should also assist in academic advancement. The hiring of a new Director of Grants and Research is indicative of the efforts made by Western’s current leadership to help the institution generate more private funding and will stimulate scholarship among faculty, administrators, and University staff.

In Spring 2012, faculty and staff were asked to complete a survey on the effectiveness of our institutional performance; a copy of this survey and its results are attached (see Appendix: Standard III: Table 2). Overall, the findings of this survey indicated that Western's strategic plan and its organization and governance system work well, that the University manages its affairs with integrity, and that procedures were communicated clearly and are consistent with our mission, vision, goals and objectives. It is expected that the University will continue to strive to accomplish its stated goals and will continue to use its strategic plan as a guide. Further, it is expected that integrity and transparency in organization and governance will also continue.

Assessment of graduate programs should identify strengths and weaknesses in these programs. Western can use this information to better serve the needs of the citizens of Connecticut.

The curriculum changes approved by the University Senate in its May 2012 meeting will shorten the approval process for minor changes in courses. This should encourage academic departments to keep information about their programs current. In addition, it will permit the curriculum committees to devote more time to more significant curricular issues. This process is currently under revision for all curricular and programmatic issues, etc.

The Distance Education Committee plans to submit a Policy Statement for Distance Education to the University Senate.

Western will continue to deal with several challenges in the coming years, including balancing declining state funding with the University's financial obligations. Articulation of our needs by our Administrators to the BOR is crucial. A second challenge relates to student retention. Implementation of the TAP initiative by the BOR should help address this issue. Recruitment of quality students is a third challenge. Our Admissions Department is implementing an alternate admission route to attract students who are highly motivated and who excelled academically in high school but are currently not being admitted to Western due to low SAT scores.

Institutional Effectiveness

Western frequently reviews the effectiveness of its organizational structure. Restructuring and personnel requests are placed regularly on the Vice Presidents meeting agenda. As new jobs occur we rank them and check their classification. Restructuring of offices, for example, the Division of Graduate and External Programs are reviewed by the Vice Presidents.

To better serve the departments and their students, a Theatre Department was created through a split of the Communications Department, and a Writing, Linguistics and Creative Process Department was created by splitting with the English Department. In addition, a new school, Visual and Performing Arts, was created and bylaws were developed.

The transparency in Western's governance process has ensured a spirit of collaboration. This collaboration is evidenced by the inclusive nature through which the strategic plan was developed (Standard II) and with which the curriculum process was revised.

Each school has its own curriculum committee, and there are two University-wide curriculum committees: CUCAS for undergraduate curriculum and the Graduate Council for graduate curriculum. Departments and curriculum committees will continue to ensure that current and relevant information is at

the core of their academic offerings; curriculum committees will oversee the process of implementing new courses and major curricular changes. Whenever possible, streamlining for efficiency will be implemented but never at the risk of thorough program vetting.

The program review process is detailed in the [Faculty Handbook](#). The recent (Spring 2012) decision to review programs every seven years instead of every ten years will ensure that all curriculum offerings at the University are current and operating at optimal level). Programs may also be recommended for discontinuance. A department (or departments if the program is interdisciplinary), CUCAS (undergraduate programs), the Graduate Council (graduate programs), the University Senate or the University President can initiate the process of program discontinuance.

In face of economic challenges, structural changes at the system level and disruptive innovation, Western Connecticut State University fulfills its mission. We take pride in the shared governance model.