SPECIAL SENATE MEETING

I. Open Forum with President Schmotter regarding ExcelCT

- Dr. Schmotter stated that the Senate developed an excellent document in response to the ExcelCT Plan. He gave the latest update of what ExcelCT seems to have evolved into now. This was a work in process and the conversation got ahead of Dr. Gray. The good news is that on Friday the BOR will be talking about a funding package for IT, physical plant, and dollars to help us enroll more students. A good metaphor is building a house. You have to have a foundation first. These funds will probably be bonding money and will be the focus of lobbying in upcoming sessions between ConnSCU and the governor’s office. While there are no numbers yet, it will not be as much as UConn received. Discussing particular strategies and branding will come later. Right now the discussion is focused on what the state needs to invest in information technology, buildings, facilities, and enrollment. President Schmotter remarked that the regional universities’ responses to ExcelCT were worthwhile because they likely slowed down the planning process. President Schmotter also clarified that the four CSUs are not in the same financial situation as the community colleges. Some of the CCs are in very difficult financial situations compared to the state universities, which are doing much better. Dr. Schmotter mentioned another issue: there will be continuing pressure for the ConnSCU system to show that it was worth doing. The system is going to be an election issue, and some of the Republican candidates are going to use it against the governor. We should work so that this is not used in a political way that would not work to our advantage. Dr. Schmotter said that the press and people writing about education issues in the state like to feed into a negative narrative looking for any problem or debate. However, there have been positive developments in the BOR, such as Nick Donofrio’s leadership.

- Dr. Schmotter called for questions.
• Senator Murray asked a question regarding funding to be divided between 17 schools. If WCSU has 10% of the students, will WCSU get 10% of the funding?

• Dr. Schmotter replied that funding has traditionally been based on numbers of full-time enrollment. We are looking at how we might change that for the four CSUs. We get a block grant that is different from the CCs.

• Dr. O’Neill referred to the fact that ExcelCT contains only a passing reference to CSUs. She expressed a concern regarding how future funds will be divided. Gray seems to have more plans for the CCs than for the CSUs. Will they get more funding?

• Dr. Schmotter suggested that we consider that some of the CCs are in a dire financial situation. The CSUs have reserve balances, but the CCs don’t.

• Dr. O’Neill asked for suggestions about what faculty can do for lobbying.

• Dr. Schmotter mentioned the legislative breakfast on the 31st.

• Senator Barrett inquired regarding Dr. Gray’s working relationship with the BOR.

• Dr. Schmotter: “I think it is evolving. It is in their interest for Dr. Gray to be successful given the past story.”

• Senator Maskel asked about financial incentives for students who transfer from CCs to the CSUs.

• Dr. Schmotter replied that there have been ideas for ways to give students a financial incentive so that they transfer to a CSU rather than a private college/university or UCONN.

• Senator Rosenthal shared a comment from the Department of History and Non-Western Cultures. His department is looking for more discussion of the place of the liberal arts in the response to ExcelCT and planning. The history department thinks that liberal arts should be a core part of our mission.

• Dr. Schmotter shared this concern and stated that ExcelCT is only a starting point. “There is no question that not only in CT but nationally there is a lack of understanding of the importance of the liberal arts.”

• Dr. James, representing the Distance Education Committee, asked about “Charter Oak” and the impact of future developments on WCSU’s online course offerings.
• Dr. Schmotter replied that Dr. Gray sees Charter Oak as an asset we can do more with. There are states that have possible models, such as Georgia. Charter Oak does not have the infrastructure or horsepower to assume all online instruction in CT.

• Dr. James posed a follow-up hypothetical question: “If HIS 101 were offered online at every college, which course would run?”

• Dr. Schmotter suggested that this is new territory without a clear answer at this point.

• Senator Murray expressed shared concern regarding this issue. The president of Charter Oak talks more about completion programs for adults. An elephant in the room is when you talk about CC students transferring to 4-year institutions. CCs are open admissions and CSUs are not. Transfer and articulation agreements give students opportunities, but it is important to be realistic about the different starting points for typical CC students and traditional CSU students.

• Senator Barrett asked a question about the future of the BOR.

• Schmotter answered that SUNY has its own kind of Board. Wisconsin has its own Board. It will be important to consider overhead and where the offices will be located, as well as the role of the governor.

• Senator Delcourt asked for clarification regarding in-state vs. out-of-state recruitment. This is particularly important for online programs and for WCSU given its proximity to New York.

• Dr. Schmotter stated that there has been more talk about recruiting out-of-state students and there was some conversation about providing financial relief to out-of-state students to aid in recruitment, but the BOR rejected that idea.

• Dr. Delcourt followed with another question regarding any conversation of proposed ratios of out-of-state vs. in-state students?

• Dr. Schmotter remarked that his ideal would be to have in-state be defined by county, not by state, which would be particularly beneficial for WCSU given the proximity of New York counties.

• Dr. James asked if it would be possible to have reciprocity with NY.

• Dr. Schmotter remarked that it would be a good idea.
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- Senator Dabros asked about prior learning assessment.

- Dr. Gates replied that she is moving forward with the associate provost and deans. Faculty will be able to examine portfolios, etc. to determine prior learning assessment. It is an initiative we are advancing.

- Dr. Schmotter added that this is a national trend, not part of ExcelCT.

- Senator Maskel inquired regarding the centralization of services, such as international services and programs at Central.

- Dr. Schmotter said that there is going to be talk about where the local entity does it better vs. centralization, such as IT, purchasing, etc. Common admissions support is being discussed, but each campus needs to support admissions locally. Students do not choose to attend ConnSCU. They choose Eastern, Western, etc.

II. WCSU’s Strategic planning process.

Dr. Schmotter reiterated points from the recent Spring 2014 opening meeting: 1) we went through a self-study with NEASC, and we will have to be cognizant of where the system is going; 2) the next 18 months should be focused on where we are going as an institution. “We probably have less robust state support now than during the previous strategic planning process. We were becoming more traditional in 2007, renting hotels for student housing, etc. That has changed. We may face a different situation in 12 months than we face now. It is going to be a dynamic process. We will have task-teams to work on planning. We have to look at our financial viability. We have to be strong with enrollment. My intent is to be inclusive, to have many conversations. Everything we come up with will go through governance procedures.”

III. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.