To: All members of CSU-AAUP

Dear Colleagues,

Below is an open letter from all of our CSU Professors regarding the mission statement adopted by the Board of Regents. You may also be interested in reading the Faculty Advisory Committee’s report to the Higher Education Committee and CSU-AAUP’s testimony to the Higher Education Committee, both of which also address ConnSCU’s Vision, Mission, and Goals.

Sincerely,

Vijay Nair
CSU-AAUP President

March 7, 2013

Philip E. Austin, Interim President, ConnSCU Board of Regents
Lewis J. Robinson, Chairperson, ConnSCU Board of Regents
Members of the Board of Regents: Richard J. Balducci, Naomi K. Cohen, Lawrence DeNardis, Nicholas M. Donofrio, Matt Fleury, Gary F. Holloway, Craig Lappen, Yvette Meléndez, René Lerer, Michael E. Pollard, Zac Zeitlin
David Levinson, Vice President for Community Colleges
Elsa Núñez, Vice President for State Universities
Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents
Jack Miller, President, Central Connecticut State University
Carl R. Lovitt, Provost, Central Connecticut State University
Rhona Free, Provost, Eastern Connecticut State University
Mary A. Papazian, President, Southern Connecticut State University
Marianne Kennedy, Interim Provost, Southern Connecticut State University
James W. Schmotter, President, Western Connecticut State University
Jane McBride Gates, Provost, Western Connecticut State University
Senator Beth Bye, Joint Committee on Higher Education & Employment Advancement
Dear Colleagues, Regents, and Other Supporters of the State Universities,

We write to you out of concern as designees of the title CSU Professor*. There are dangerous signs that in the new ConnSCU consolidation of our campuses with the community colleges, we are being downgraded from teaching and research universities to solely teaching universities.

We were named as CSU Professors in large part to promote research on the CSU campuses. Yet research is not mentioned at all in the ConnSCU mission statement. The entirety of the mission statement is:

"Connecticut State Colleges and Universities provide affordable, innovative and rigorous programs in a setting that permits an ever increasing number of students to achieve their personal and career goals as well as contribute to the economic growth of the state of Connecticut."

Compare that with the University of Connecticut’s mission statement:

"The University of Connecticut is dedicated to excellence demonstrated through national and international recognition. As Connecticut’s public research university, through freedom of academic inquiry and expression, we create and disseminate knowledge by means of scholarly and creative achievements, graduate and professional education, and outreach. Through our focus on teaching and learning, the University helps every student grow intellectually and become a contributing member of the state, national, and world communities. Through research, teaching, service, and outreach, we embrace diversity and cultivate leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As our state's flagship public university, and as a land and sea grant institution, we promote the health and well-being of Connecticut’s citizens."

No university in the United States can claim quality status without a research mission. Yet the ConnSCU reorganization appears to be premised on a sharp division of labor of the state’s public universities in which only the University of Connecticut will be allowed to claim research as central to its mission.

Each year the old CSU Board of Trustees had us serve as a jury to select the winner of a system-wide award for outstanding research accomplishments. The ConnSCU Board of Trustees has eliminated that award. In its place will be an award for the merged community college and four-year faculties. The implication is that our research is of no more importance than that of the community colleges, which don’t have explicit research missions.
Connecticut has long suffered from a two-tier higher education system for its public four-year universities with the University of Connecticut as the self-described flagship research university claiming disproportionate resources. Its faculty receive 30% higher salaries on average and teach half as many classes. And now UConn's budget is being expanded while that of ConnSCU is being reduced.

But it is a myth that the University of Connecticut is the state's exclusive producer of public university faculty research. The CSU collective bargaining agreement and promotion and tenure standards have significant expectations for research and creative activity. CSU faculty through their research show students how to think critically, apply the concepts of their disciplines to solve real-world problems, bring positive attention and prestige to their institutions and the state, and attract funding from federal and private funding sources. The rigor of CSU academic programs grows out of research activities. CSU also has graduate and professional programs -- that's why its campuses are classified as universities rather than colleges. Graduate students have to produce original research. But if their faculty mentors aren't able to provide good models for this, then they aren't serving their students very well.

Connecticut should follow the lead of states such as Michigan, Iowa, Oregon, and Oklahoma that have two public research universities. Now is the time to be upgrading rather than downgrading the status of its "other" public university.

As we said, we are deeply troubled by the lacuna in the ConnSCU mission statement regarding the importance of research. We believe that this absence gives a false impression of the vital role and expectation for research that actually takes place at our state universities. It contradicts our long understanding of who we are as state universities and degrades vital educational activities that routinely take place on our campuses. We ask to hear back from you in a timely manner as to how the current mission statement was developed, what discussions were held in drawing it up and whether faculty were involved. What is the rationale for deleting this vital element in the mission of our state universities? Can the mission statement be amended and expanded to properly reflect the importance to faculty, students and the community of state university research in all our disciplines?

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

Imna Arroyo, CSU Professor of Art, Eastern Connecticut State University

Felton O. Best, CSU Professor of Philosophy, Central Connecticut State University

John Briggs, CSU Professor Emeritus of Writing, Linguistics and Creative Process, Western Connecticut State University

Edward Hagan, CSU Professor of Writing, Linguistics and Creative Process, Western Connecticut State University

James E. Mazur, CSU Professor of Psychology, Southern Connecticut State University
C. Thomas Philbrick, CSU Professor of Biological & Environmental Sciences, Western Connecticut State University

Heather Prescott, CSU Professor of History, Central Connecticut State University

James W. Russell, CSU Professor of Sociology, Eastern Connecticut State University

Vivian C. Shipley, CSU Professor of English, Southern Connecticut State University

Joseph Solodow, CSU Professor of Spanish & Latin, Southern Connecticut State University

Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, CSU Professor of Education, Eastern Connecticut State University

Marie A. Wright, CSU Professor of Management Information Systems, Western Connecticut State University

*"The Board, upon the recommendation of a President and the Chancellor, may award full-time members the title, CSU Professor, provided that the member: 1) has been recommended for the honor by the President who has received the advice of a committee elected from the membership by a procedure designed by the Senate and approved by the President; 2) has been recognized by peers in the field for professional excellence. CSU Professors shall retain their title for the duration of their service to the system Not more than four (4) CSU Professorships shall be awarded in any given year, and there shall not be more than twelve (12) in Connecticut State University nor more than three (3) in any one university at any given time." CSU Board of Trustees - AAUP 2007-2016 Contract.