

Capitol Monitor

A Report on Activity at the State Capitol

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Higher Ed Unions Join Forces Again At Lobby Day:

Faculty and students took to the halls of the Legislative Office Building March 31 for the second Joint Lobby Day of the 2017 Legislative Session. Flanked by members of UConn-AAUP and the 4Cs, CSU-AAUP members and CSU students met with legislators to defend quality higher education, protect collective bargaining rights, and to speak out for undocumented students. Meetings with legislators and their aides were arranged after a morning reception and presentation from the three union presidents and CSU-AAUP lobbyist Joe Grabarz.



Above, CCSU faculty attending the March 31 Lobby Day.

With the preponderance of negative bills that stand to rob employees of collective bargaining rights, affect the integrity of faculty working and student learning conditions, and risk the quality of public higher education, our continued advocacy at the Capitol is essential.

State Budget Battles Loom... and Doom:

On the heels of almost a \$1 billion cut from public services last year, the 2017 budget negotiations are shaping up to be riddled with even greater austerity as Connecticut sees revenues that fail to hit the mark and decreases in federal funding.

The total proposed budget for FY18 is more than \$19.36 billion and FY19 is more than \$19.95 billion. The projected deficit for FY18 is \$1.68 billion and for FY19 it is \$1.92 billion. Governor Malloy's proposed budget closes the gap by making \$1.36 billion in cuts and raising \$321 million in revenue. This includes the governor's proposed \$700 million in collective bargaining concessions/cuts, \$407.6 million in municipal contributions to the Teacher's Retirement System, and \$256.2 million in cuts.

There are alternative budgets in the works among progressive legislators, Republicans, and moderate Democrats and Republicans who are working together. And while new revenue stream possibilities beyond taxes on cigarettes and gun permits do exist, the votes aren't there to pass them into law.

With an evenly split Senate and the House holding the majority by a mere seven seats, any budget deal will be difficult to pass. As such, CSU-AAUP members must reach out to members of both parties. Every legislator is important and support cannot be taken for granted. CSU-AAUP has worked to maintain a presence at the Capitol and establish relationships with legislators who will fight for what is important to our members and to public higher education.

Through lobby days, rallies, letter writing, op-ed writing, and testifying before legislative committees, our members are keeping public higher education, our students and our faculty in the forefront of legislators' minds as an essential element to ensuring Connecticut's future success.

[Click here to find out how to contact your legislators.](#) Tell them to support public higher education because public higher education is a public good and an essential ingredient in the future success of Connecticut.

Stay tuned for more actions from CSU-AAUP as we make sure lawmakers hear the Faculty Voice and stand up for public higher education.

The O-Bomb... Boom, There It Is:

In an [open letter to CSCU faculty and staff](#) on April 3, Board of Regents President Mark Ojakian announced sweeping changes to the CSCU system that would see a 20 percent reduction in administration and a consolidation of the community college network.

In his report to the Board of Regents, Ojakian stressed the importance of maintaining quality public higher education that puts students first. [Click here to see a copy of the report.](#)

In previous meetings with faculty leaders, Ojakian remained cagey about the plan and gave away no details and only say to "stay tuned." Now that the plan is out in the open, faculty leaders look forward to meeting with Ojakian in coming days to have a more candid discussion about the details of his plan.

[A CT Mirror article](#) about the announcement quotes Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff saying: "I think he's spent a lot of time talking to folks in the system — and also listening, which is a massive departure from what has happened in the past. I think the bright spot in his plan is he doesn't cut faculty positions and really brings structural changes into the system."

Dreamers' Bills Come Closer To True:

Two pieces of legislation that will allow undocumented students to receive institutional financial aid passed the Higher Education Committee on March 15. These bills now await to be called for a vote on the House and Senate floor.

To raise awareness at the legislature of the need for [HB700](#) and [SB17](#) to be brought to a vote, CT Students For A Dream are holding an #AffordToDream Week of Action April 10-15, 2017.

For more information or to attend any of their events, [please click here.](#)