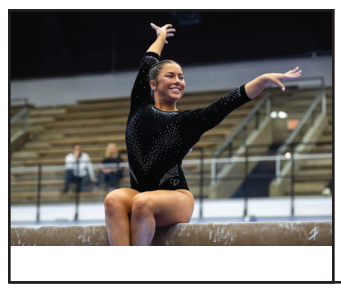


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SOUTHERN NEWS

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CSCUs chancellor investigated for fund misuse

By Solé Scott
Editor-in-Chief



PHOTO | INSTAGRAM

Terrance Cheng, the current chancellor of the four CSCU's, who was appointed on May 7, 2021.

The chancellor of Connecticut State Colleges & Universities was caught in hot water amid an investigation into misuse of funds.

The news hit the airwaves on Oct. 24, 2024, that Terrence Cheng who is chancellor of Connecticut's largest public college system, was excessively spending student tuition and taxpayer dollars for personal use.

According to CT Insider, Cheng spent student and taxpayer money on food, private chauffeurs, alcohol and had outstanding missing receipts that is difficult to grasp how much he actually spent in total.

This information was not made public until CT Insider filed a complaint for CSCU to release documentation of this problem.

This is an extreme issue as CSCU's are trying to avoid more tuition hikes and budget cuts that have been plaguing the system for years.

Nursing major Kiara Bishop-Reid, a freshman, shared her thoughts on this serious issue.

"I feel like it's genuinely unfair to the students that attend these colleges because we should be putting this money towards benefiting the colleges of Connecticut but he's judging the usage of the money for his expense which is arbitrary," Bishop-Reid said.

On Oct. 25, Governor Ned Lamont and the state comptroller Sean Scanlon launched an investigation into Cheng and his excessive spending.

"We are going to do a pretty strong audit to see exactly what's going on over there to see if this is just a one off or something more serious," Lamont said.

Even more information was provided to the public about the kind of expenses Cheng was using.

"The things we found range from expensive meals, to delivery services, to room service, to dry cleaning, to improper tickets to events that were not school-related functions," Scanlon said.

Cheng released a statement during a press conference on Dec. 19.

"I take personal accountability, responsibility for my role in that and it's my job to do better personally," Cheng said.

The financial burden CSCU is under right now is immense. Tuition hiked up 5% for the 2024-25 school year.

"All I can say is that I've learned lessons, I will not make the same mistakes again, and that we will continue to do everything we can to fight for the best educational experience for our students," Cheng said.

To add on, Connecticut State Community College faculty and staff recently voted 31-2 "no confidence," according to CT Insider.

This vote is concerning, and we could see a transition in leadership if more questionable antics are made aware to faculty and staff.

"This report highlights what we already know – that consistent controls, improved training and clearer policies are needed to increase accountability and transparency – which is why the CSCU system office is actively working on new system-wide p-card and travel policies," CSCU statement said.

A search for permanent president is underway



PHOTO | CSCU WEBSITE

A pamphlet of the presidental search process.

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

As the university looks to the future, the process of selecting its next leader has become a key priority. While Dwayne Smith is currently serving as the university's interim president, the institution has recently initiated a search for its permanent president.

This follows an announcement from Terrence Cheng, Chancellor of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), on the CSCU website on Jan. 25.

"The Chancellor of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities invites nominations and applications for the position of President at Southern Connecticut State University," CSCU website states.

Jes Kras, Chief Human Resources Officer and Search Committee Co-Chair, recently released in an email to the campus community that the Search Committee has been working alongside Chancellor Cheng, System Office staff, and the executive search firm WittKieffer to develop a position profile and establish a detailed timeline for the search process.

According to CSCU's timeline, the search process is progressing as planned, with the Search Committee and Search Chair appointed, the scope of work completed, the contract finalized and the university's administrative support established by the week of Nov. 25, 2024.

Currently, the university is in phase No. 2 of the timeline, as they are in the process of selecting a Search Advisory Committee.

According to CSCU's President Search Process documents, the main role of the Search Advisory Committee is to provide valuable feedback at different stages of the presidential search process.

"This includes contribution to the development of the leadership profile, assessing candidate resumes, and participating in the interviews of semi-finalists and finalists," the CSCU documents state.

Kras also released in his email on Jan. 31, that they are in the process of appointing a 29-member Search Advisory Committee, which will include representation from key stakeholder groups on campus: five faculty members, five administrative faculty, five classified employees, four non-represented employees, fivestudents and five external stakeholders, such as alumni, foundation members and business leaders.

Based on the CSCU timeline, the Search Advisory Committee appointments and elections are expected to be submitted to the Search Chair by Feb. 21.

Application and candidate materials to be considered for the role as president, will be accepted until March 14.

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Breezeway temporarily closed



PHOTO | JAY'MI VAZQUEZ

The breezeway between the old School of Business building and former student center on Monday, Feb. 10.

By Victoria Cruz
Contributer

On Jan. 31, the Associate Vice President for Capital Budgeting and Facilities Operations, Eric Lessne, announced that the doors to the breezeway between the old School of Business building and the former student center would be closed until further notice.

Chief of Police at the SCSU police department, Makiem Miller stated that "University police had to conduct a small investigation before any details can be released yet...there are no current safety concerns for the area for students, faculty or staff," Miller said.

An official statement is expected to be released by the department soon.

Eric Lessne was able to offer further insight into the closure.

Over the past six months there have been sightings of unauthorized individuals around the area.

During this period doors to the old student center were found unlocked, and items from the building had gone missing.

The building is currently being used by the Long Wharf Theatre and other campus organizations for storage.

Two weeks ago, school officials discovered an unauthorized occupant who had gained access to the building and established an unpermitted living space within the premises.

Officials suspect the individual had been in the space for the past month.

The individual was removed following intervention by university officials. Since then, measures have been taken to secure the building including changing the locks and bolting down windows.

While the investigation is not complete, it is currently believed that the unauthorized individual gained access to the building using a window. Lessne was unable to confirm at this time whether there was more than one unauthorized occupant.

As mentioned, the building is not actively in use, but because of the university's commitment to sustainability, they stored items that are accessed frequently.

This was a key factor in the university's decision, as officials initially deemed the situation an active safety concern.

University officials have indicated that there are plans to repurpose the space next year, though details are still being finalized.

A proposed budget plan in place for the 2026-27 school year is currently awaiting legislative approval to renovate and repurpose the building.

"Until the building is occupied and we know there is a normal flow of occupants in the building the risk will remain. Me personally I'd like to see it stay closed"

Lessne noted that until the building returns to regular occupancy, the risk of unauthorized individuals attempting to inhabit the space will remain.

However, he emphasized that current security measures aim to mitigate these concerns.

Investigating officials are actively monitoring the situation and have assured that they will keep the campus community informed as more details emerge.

As discussions and investigations continue and securities measures remain in place.

The future of the building, and ultimately how it may be repurposed, remains uncertain at this time.