2011 audit reflects accountability, culture shift as CSU embarks on paradigm change

Administrators point to dramatic improvements, including new compliance unit, staff training and commitment to addressing past practices

March 21, 2012 — Two years into its tenure, the administrative team at Chicago State University reaffirms its commitment to operational excellence as they engage the 145-year-old institution in a total paradigm shift.

As such, administrators, faculty, and staff welcome the 2010-11 state audit report of financial and administrative practices, published on March 22, 2012. The total number of audit findings dropped to 34 in the 2011 audit from 41 in 2010. The number of repeat findings fell by 50 percent — to 22.

The reduction is a result of CSU’s comprehensive campaign of instituting corrective actions, department by department, to bring the university into a 21st century paradigm where best practices and effective use of technology supports educational outcomes and accountability.

As systemic findings often take a minimum of two years to correct, CSU expects the repeat findings to further decrease. CSU is taking an aggressive approach to eliminate future audit findings.

“Chicago State took a proactive approach this year by instituting corrective action plans immediately upon identifying potential audit findings, by us or the auditors,” says Vice President of Administration and Finance Glenn Meeks. “We’re quite serious about making a significant impact on the number of findings each year and are well aware that these things take time.”

The majority of the findings reflect some outdated practices. However, CSU’s leadership team takes ownership of these moving forward and is committed to correcting all findings.

“These findings, on the whole, reflect organizational transition and the need for succession planning,” says Meeks, who has spent decades in university finance and administration.

Working with the Board of Trustees, the administration has implemented aggressive new practices and policies. A new internal compliance unit was formed and is headed by the Director of Compliance, Carla Davis, who is enforcing the university’s corrective action plans and training staff in new and best practices.

State Senator Toi Hutchinson (40th) announced recently on WVON, the intention to lay the groundwork for smoother transitions at state universities. Hutchinson said she will introduce “transitional audit” legislation to provide a benchmark for incoming university presidents and
make transparent any operational failures or challenges new leadership must address upon walking in the door.

“Whenever a new administration comes into a university setting, usually there are a lot of things that person is faced with the minute they walk through the door. You have to identify what you’re dealing with,” Hutchinson told WVON host Cliff Kelley. “Now, in this era of budgeting for results, and changing the way we go through the budgeting and appropriations process, we need to establish baselines.”

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