2010-11 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 2010-11 audit from 41 in 2010-2009. 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.

CSU expect repeat findings to further drop, as findings often take two years to correct. CSU has developed a novel approach to mitigating this exposure:

“Chicago State took a proactive approach this year by instituting corrective action plans immediately upon identifying discrepancies, 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.”

CSU’s leadership team accepts responsibility for correcting all findings, even if the majority of them reflect practices that began before their tenure.

“These findings, on the whole, reflect inattention to detail or lack of oversight, which we have and will continue to correct,” says Meeks, who has spent decades in university finance and administration. “What these findings unequivocally do not show is fraud, waste or resource abuse.”

Working with the Board of Trustees, the administration has ushered in aggressive new practices and policies to put the university on solid footing. Case in point: a new internal compliance unit was formed and is headed by a compliance officer, a seasoned attorney, who is enforcing the university’s corrective action plans and training staff in new and best practices.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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 every time we get a chance.”

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