To: CTC System Presidents   DRAFT

From: Members of the Instruction Commission

Date: Nov.18, 2020

PURPOSE

This document is a request from the Instructional Commission to institute new working philosophies and methods with ctcLink in order to achieve effective college and SBCTC operations with the platform. Our immediate goal is to create a system responsive to the outstanding and ongoing dysfunctions in ctcLink with the long-term goal of developing stability for the current "live" colleges and those in subsequent deployment groups.

We speak from the experience of colleges in all "live" deployment groups as well as those yet to convert. We are compelled to join together to consider alternative solutions because we are plagued by both human and technological challenges across every pillar of ctcLink. Problems exist at every stage of implementation - from open, deferred, and on-hold tickets dating back to 2015 to new colleges that cannot effectively operate and are performing back-end adjustments to get even basic functionality. There are critical issues with privacy and security, student finance, college finance, enrollment and instruction…; no area is secure or fully operational.

We believe new systems and ways of working together must be immediately implemented in order to stabilize deployed colleges and avoid exacerbating existing issues by carrying them over to future colleges. We offer a solutions-based approach that seeks to capitalize on our collaborative history, our connection as a system, and our collective knowledge that will ultimately allow live colleges to identify and resolve issues and to smooth the path for the colleges next in line. Most of all, we write on behalf of students who put their trust in us and who we have been failing to serve equitably.

REQUESTED ACTIONS from ctcLink Project Leadership

1. **Live Up to Our System's Commitment to Equity**
Presently, ctcLink exists outside of the goals of our system and colleges. Every aspect of our operation relies upon ctcLink, but challenges with its deployment hinder our ability to pursue our visions and fulfil our missions. This is in sharp focus when we consider our system's commitment to equity. For example:

· Colleges have been, and continue to be, unable to fully award financial aid, leaving historically marginalized and low-income students most at risk.

· A multitude of ADA requirement gaps create barriers for students and vulnerability for individual institutions. While there is a plan in place to address these concerns, the implementation timeline is unclear.

· Transgender and gender non-binary students suffer routine microaggressions because of the failure of the platform to consider them.

· Our lowest-paid employee groups—frequently our most diverse—are disproportionately over-burdened by the demands of conversion and implementation.

We are steadfastly committed to equity and closing opportunity gaps, but our implementation of ctcLink is continuing to marginalize our most vulnerable students and leaves our staff burdened, rather than lifting them up with support and responsiveness to achieve their goals.

Vision: To expect more of ourselves and all ctcLink colleagues in the pursuit of our institutional and system-wide equity goals. We develop a comprehensive timeline with accountability measures for providing essential services, meeting legal requirements, achieving accessibility certification, eliminating systemic discrimination, and building a truly inclusive environment.

2. Appoint SBCTC ctcLink personnel as Embedded Team Members at each college
Vision: Two to three SBCTC staff join two to three college staff on a local ctcLink team. There is direct and immediate access to the Embedded Team Members by their college counterparts. The Embedded Team Members work as liaisons between college administration and the SBCTC ctcLink team. The Embedded Team Members know the unique situation of their assigned college and are invested in and evaluated according to the success of that college. Their job focus is to support stability, not merely implementation. They share a common interest and accountability with the college for the project's success because they are members of the college team and motivated to act on the college's behalf; it is student focused and college focused. This approach also ensures responsiveness to critical issues and does not require the individual tracking of multiple tickets submitted by multiple users for the same issue.

Once stabilization has been reached, one Embedded Team Member continues to serve their college in the long-term to provide follow-up on unresolved issues, to maintain advocacy, and to provide just-in-time solutions management. Remaining embedded team members move to a new college to begin the work of full operation and stability of the new college's ctcLink system. N.B. The definition of "stability" must be mutually agreed upon.

3. **Increase End-to-End Training**
Vision: All colleges are provided with hands on, end-to-end training led by PeopleSoft experts and supported by Embedded Team Members. This training continues to be available for new hires, upskilling, and rollout of additions or modifications. The improved training model minimizes trial and error solution-finding and results in more efficient and accurate learning. After repeated attempts to solve the same critical issues locally, colleges no longer receive responses such as this:

"We are no longer able to meet requests for additional training. As you know, developing broadly available resource materials for repeat use was determined to be the most sustainable approach. To this end, we have an extensive catalog of Self-Paced Training Online available through Canvas as well as QRGs (Quick Reference Guides) available in the ctcLink Reference Center." [October 2020]

It has been counterproductive for colleges, and wasteful of college resources, for SBCTC both to cut-off training early—forcing the cultivation of homegrown talent—and then to hire away this local talent from the colleges once their expertise has reached a college-sustaining level. The expertise of this staff has been developed from the vantage point of a particular college's implementation. They would make excellent Embedded Team Members but do not eliminate the system-wide need for deep, broad platform expertise.

4. **Form College Collaboratives and Functional Work Groups**
Vision: We move forward as a team of colleagues, collaboratively and respectfully sharing expertise and actively problem-solving. College teams connect with each other to troubleshoot solutions, share best practices, and maintain advocacy. The college-to-college support network is paralleled by working groups for each functional area, each of which has at least one assigned specialist from SBCTC. There are regular, organized meetings of the working groups at which the assigned SBCTC specialists are in attendance, and where there is open communication about identified issues and attempts to resolve them. Both groups exist as much for communication as for problem-solving.

5. **Increase Transparency**
Vision: To ensure a high level of cohesive achievement of our goals, this implementation is both college- and system- focused. Information flows in both directions and decisions involve college level stakeholders including members of expert teams and Embedded Team Members. Critical information is public facing to all colleges, not kept from view on a platform or page requiring special access. It is easily searchable and accessed via minimal clicks from the SBCTC homepage. When technical jargon is used, plain-language explanations are offered. Further, decisions on timelines, requests, and project changes are in full system view within 48 hours and communicated widely via existing and commonly utilized channels of system-wide communication.

6. **Consider All Costs**
We recognize that we are incurring significant costs to make this implementation, and request we talk more openly and completely about not only the direct financial costs, but also the indirect costs that colleges are incurring. These include additional training related to staff turnover from the stress of implementation, the overtime required to support campus work, and the erosion of public trust, satisfaction, and confidence in their communities' colleges.

Vision: A proactive redesign of our deployment process will help to move costs from an added, unpredictable impact on colleges to an inbuilt, planned-for model.

7. **Evolve the Governance Structure:**

The ctcLink Governance structure was designed in a planning mode. Now that we are deeper in implementation, a transition to greater college involvement is in order, as evidenced by all we address above and the vast number of specific issues that led us to write this letter. To realize our vision, we suggest that the existing Governance structure change from the one-sided and opaque consultation model currently in place, to a mutually beneficial, transparent, and responsive collaborative model.

Vision: End users become a more engaged part of the structure and are granted mutual authority to impact decisions. This includes representatives of key functional areas, including accessibility, enrollment/registration, finance, financial aid, payroll, human resources, instruction, information technology, etc. A more streamlined structure is in place, with the Governance committee meeting more often and with a shortened feedback loop for hearing and resolving prioritized problems.

We appreciate your consideration of our proposal and offer our full assistance. We send it as the beginning of a conversation and action plan, and we understand any plan will benefit from regular assessment and continuous improvement. We believe in our CTC system and offer our positive spirit, ideas, and willingness to collaborate as partners, working together for our students and the missions we embrace. This is, after all, the strength of the CTC system.