STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Auditors of Public Accounts

AUDIT SUMMARY
Charter Oak State College
State Data Center General Controls

www.ctauditors.gov

As of August 2023

BACKGROUND

CharterOak
STATE COLLEGE

Charter Oak State College is a unique member of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, in that it is the state's only online-only college. Charter Oak offers degrees to approximately 2,000 students at the associate's, bachelor's, and master's levels, comprising twenty-one different programs. An additional twenty certificate programs are offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Charter Oak State College's IT group administers and oversees the college's technological needs, including user administration and processing, server and hardware maintenance, and communications and connectivity for faculty and staff. Being an online institution, the IT group and its function are critical to daily operations.

ABOUT THE AUDIT

We have audited certain operations of Charter Oak State College in fulfillment of our duties under Section 2-90 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The scope of our audit included, but was not necessarily limited to internal controls as of August 2023. The objectives of our audit were to evaluate the:

1. College's internal controls over significant information technology resources;

2. College's compliance with policies and procedures internal to the college or promulgated by other state agencies; and

3. Effectiveness and efficiency of certain management practices and operations.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Link to full report

4 Total Findings

Our audit identified internal control deficiencies and a need for improvement in practices and procedures that warrant management's attention.

NOTEWORTHY FINDINGS

Findings

Recommendations

1 Our review determined that while Charter Oak State College maintains detailed procedures for many of the activities corresponding to the NIST control families (e.g., configuration management, contingency planning, maintenance, personnel security, risk assessment), it appears to lack high-level policy documents that govern these procedures.

Charter Oak State College should develop sufficient policies to mitigate threats to its information technology assets and ensure compliance with regulations and laws relevant to its environment.

2 Charter Oak State College has mitigated much of its own risk by leveraging cloud environments. However, residual risk persists due to remaining on-premises equipment. We observed no purposeful strategy to minimize current identified threats to the continuous operation of the institution, such as a comprehensive risk assessment or regular threat assessments.

Charter Oak State College should develop a comprehensive threat assessment plan that evaluates potential threats to assets and the likelihood and impact of an adverse event affecting the availability of systems and data and stability of continued operation.

3 Although the college provided evidence of a disaster recovery plan for third-party providers of mission critical software, its internally developed plan is out of date and has not been approved by its current information technology leadership.

Charter Oak State College should develop and maintain a comprehensive disaster recovery plan.

4 Due to one employee's leave of absence, Charter Oak State College IT staff were unable to access critical resources during our audit.

Charter Oak State College should strengthen internal controls to ensure that it sufficiently cross trains its information technology staff to safeguard against one employee maintaining sole access to critical systems.