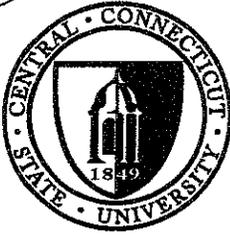


Testimony by Dr. Serafin Mendez-Mendez
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and



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Before the Committees on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
And Commerce
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Good afternoon Senator Hartley and Representative Willis and Senator LeBeau and Representative Berger and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement and Commerce Committees. For the record, I am Dr. Serafin Mendez-Mendez, Professor of Communications at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). Along with me is Professor Jeffrey Teitler one of the lead digital film faculty in our department. We are here to testify in support of House Bill 5509, *An Act Concerning the Development of a Film Industry Curriculum*, House Bill 5510, *An Act Creating a Skilled Workforce for Connecticut's Film Industry* and House Bill 5585, *An Act Concerning Digital and Film Media*.

Central Connecticut State University has been a huge advocate of new technologies and Digital Film Production. Over the past few years, CCSU has worked diligently to build an infrastructure of such technologies and digital filmmaking equipment for the department and students to utilize. With that, the Department of Communication has requested, received and utilized funding (in the amount of approximately \$175,000) to support filmmaking, digital photography and web-based applications. These funds have been used to enhance our current digital editing lab as well as to create an entirely new editing lab equipped with movie-style seating and a large screen to preview student works. Our newest lab is also equipped with 11 Intel Macs, which house both, Final Cut Pro and Avid (2 industry-standard software editing packages). Moreover, funds have also been utilized to purchase three (3) hi-def prosumer camcorders as well as three (3) portable lighting kits and sound equipment. Additionally, we have also purchased a web-server and software applications for students to build websites and stream their media. Though this is a terrific start, it should be noted that due to budgetary constraints, we are working with consumer/prosumer camera equipment and not professional equipment that is utilized in industry productions.

Currently, much of the class-work is based within individually created productions (as opposed to larger scale filmmaking collaborations -- or group work). We find this type of work best engages our set of students and empowers each student's individual vision. Currently, our students are conceiving and developing ideas (which are non-reliant on larger industry for effective production).

Moreover, through individually-based productions, each student is empowered creatively and is responsible for all aspects of their own production including casting, lighting, direction, filming and performing all of the necessary post work to create an effective short film, documentary, PSA, etc. This work is displayed and currently streaming on our new production website: www.communication.ccsu.edu/PRODUCTION/Production.html

Additionally, our students work with non-profit organizations, creating media for fundraising and awareness purposes. Last semester, we worked with the Governor's Prevention Partnership on a short film. This semester we are participating within the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut's PSA Contest as well as in talks with Connecticut Legal Services for their new production. This is not to say larger scale collaborations do not happen in our department. In fact, last semester, Bob Kagan taught an advanced production course, which utilized many of the aspects included in this Bill. A sample of that film is available on the production website under his "Narrative" category.

We are happy to see an emphasis placed on Digital Filmmaking Education. With the proper investment, such technologies and practices can potentially enable our students to effectively support and work within the film industry. Additionally, the potential for such technologies to be utilized to engage local, underserved students currently at-risk with traditional forms of education is also well worth investigating. In a number of endeavors, we have seen massive transformation in both the job related skills and critical abilities of such students who engage in these technologies. Moreover, at-risk students previously thought least likely to succeed are winning national scholarships and other accolades due to digital filmmaking.

This is a worthwhile endeavor and has massive educational benefits. A number of possible collaborations in filmmaking with CCSU, students and the local community can also be developed. More importantly, we have the potential to allow the State of Connecticut to build an infrastructure in support of the film industry. Many of our students are currently interning in CT-based production houses and news organizations. We look forward to expanding our facilities to include more industry standard equipment, both hardware and software.

As we are seeing a dramatic increase in interest and enrollment in digital production, we are in the process of both working with other departments on an interdisciplinary Film Minor as well as creating a Media Production major to be housed in the Department of Communication. Such a program would be primarily rooted in the production of media and would ideally utilize professional camera and editing equipment to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. We would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.