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Good afternoon Senator Hartley, Representative Willis, Senator LeBeau and Representative Berger and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement and Commerce Committees. For the record, I am James W. Schmotter, President of Connecticut State University (WCSU). I am 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*.

We at Western Connecticut State University support these bills because of their congruence with some of our strongest academic areas of concentration and most promising community partnerships. I'm speaking here about WCSU's focus on the Visual and Performing Arts, our curricula in communication, music and theatre, and our new partnership with the Connecticut Film Festival.

As the only university in the CSUS System with a School of Visual and Performing Arts, we offer an array of courses relevant to the development and maturation of a vibrant film industry in Connecticut. These include Technical Theatre I and II, Creative Dramatics, Acting for the Camera, Playwriting Workshop, Voice and Diction, Directing, Lighting, Costume and Makeup, Methods of Scenic Art and Craft, Advanced Playwright, and Auditioning Techniques for the Actor. In our Communication Department, we offer specialized courses in Preproduction for Television and Film, Script Writing, Intermediate and Advanced Video Production as well as courses the various interactions of film, television and the media with society.

These courses are delivered by WCSU colleagues with both outstanding academic and professional credentials. Examples of these include Associate Professor of Theatre Elizabeth Popiel, who recently won an Emmy for her work on the Weekend Edition of "Good Morning America," and Assistant Professor of Communication Carina Tautu, whose film "Still Center" was one of 30 films chosen from more than 300 submissions to be shown at the opening weekend of the Connecticut Film Festival in September 2007.

We at WCSU have also been directly involved in Connecticut's burgeoning film industry in two other ways. First, we are regularly approached by production companies seeking locations for filming. Most recently our Midtown Campus and art studios were backdrops for scenes of a major motion picture, "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, Part II," which will appear in theatres this summer. And we are forging a partnership

with the City of Danbury to host the Connecticut Film Festival, which will provide a showcase for independent film makers.

I believe that the assertive development of the film industry can be an important element in Connecticut's future economic development. Already, the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism in 2006 reported that "the arts, film, history and tourism together account for over \$14 billion in economic activity and 170,000 jobs annually." We are poised at WCSU to be an important player in that development. The building of our new School of Visual and Performing Arts Instructional Facility will permit us to become even more actively involved in the exciting task of creating Connecticut's arts and culture workforce. We look forward eagerly to that.

Thank you for listening.



Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Elizabeth Popiel, on the set of "Good Morning America."

## Popiel's efforts yield Emmy Award

On weekdays, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Elizabeth Popiel usually can be found in her studio designing sets for WestConn's theatre arts productions. On weekends, Popiel's still designing sets, but she's doing it in New York where she works as the set designer/art director for "Good Morning America, Weekend Edition."

Popiel has worked for ABC on and off since 1993, but when "Weekend Edition" was launched in 2004, that became a steady weekend gig. She maintains the regular sets and also designs the backdrops for special segments, such as the studio kitchen necessary when Chef Emeril Lagasse appears.

Her WestConn students have been fortunate to be able to visit the ABC scene shops and watch other professional designers at work.

"It's wonderful to be able to combine my love for teaching and my craft," Popiel explained when asked how she juggles both her weekday and weekend jobs.

Her hard work paid off recently when Popiel received an Emmy Award for her contributions to "Good Morning America." While Popiel said she's been honored for her creative work in many ways in the past, this is her first big industry award. ☐

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