



*Education That Works For a Lifetime*

**To: The Honorable Thomas Gaffey, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Andrew Fleischmann, House Chair  
The Honorable John Fonfara, Senate Vice Chair  
The Honorable Tom Reynolds, House Vice Chair  
The Honorable Sam Caligiuri, Senate Ranking  
The Honorable Marilyn Guiliano, House Ranking  
Members of the Education Committee**

**From: Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor  
Connecticut Community Colleges**

**Re: Public Hearing Testimony  
Regarding *HB 6370, An Act Concerning a Middle College System***

**Date: March 9, 2009**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding *HB 6370* through the position statement of the Board of Trustees for the Community-Technical Colleges.

**Expanding Access to Higher Education:  
A Goal for the Board of Trustees for Community-Technical Colleges**

At the Board meeting on Monday February 23, 2009, the Board of Trustees for Community-Technical Colleges reaffirmed its commitment to access and success for all Connecticut's students. Through system wide partnerships with Connecticut High Schools such as:

- the High School Partnership program established by the Board in 1987,
- the Dual Enrollment Initiative implemented in 2004 with support from the General Assembly, and
- the College of Technology, a legislatively mandated curriculum pathway instituted in 1992 to expand access to technical education at the Connecticut Community Colleges,

the Board of Trustees has demonstrated its dedication to creating seamless pathways for high school students, including technical high school students, to gain access to college and to post secondary technical education, to earn credits applicable towards college certificates and degrees, and to enter CT's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Knowledge Economy with the skills needed to meet the demand of Connecticut's businesses and industries.

Strengthening the alignment between community colleges and Connecticut's high schools offers students many opportunities including:

- A more rigorous high school curriculum
- Assessment and development of college-level skills
- Developmental course work to overcome achievement gaps
- Access to college-level courses and faculty
- Access to college instructional and information technology
- Access to learning strategies and support services such as education pathways
- Expanded access to post secondary education, curriculum pathways and transfer
- Preparation in high demand fields of employment
- Expanded career choices and employment opportunities

Great potential to bring these benefits to high school students currently exists in Connecticut through programs such as College Career Pathways, the system wide collaborations described above, and community college partnerships throughout the state that offer a variety of models including Middle Colleges, early college experiences, bridge programs, accelerated developmental courses, summer study programs, and team-taught coordinated curricula. These early college experience programs offer what Board Chair Louise Berry described as "a world of choice" for high school students. Each of them meets the needs of local high schools and each has been developed to deliver on the Board's goal to expand access and opportunity for Connecticut students.

However, high school is not the only pathway to community colleges and large numbers of community college students come with varying goals and various experiences before enrolling. They include:

- Transfer students
- Adult students
- Underprepared and disadvantaged students
- Employed and unemployed workers
- Non-credit students and non-English speaking students

The comprehensive mission of the community colleges accommodates all these students and meets them at their level of educational need. It is this comprehensive mission that has enabled the Connecticut Community College System to grow to become the largest constituent unit in the State serving one of every two undergraduates and two-thirds of the minority undergraduates enrolled in public higher education.

The current proposal to create a Middle College System changes the focus from serving all those needing the opportunity for higher education to focus only on those students interested in workforce development and job training. A changed but undefined governance structure appears to neglect all those who are other than technical high schools students and could change or limit the college system's mission considerably to affect accreditation, transfer programs, articulation agreements, and services for the large population of adult students, career education students and non-credit students.

While recognizing the seriousness of the fiscal crisis facing the State, the Board expressed grave concerns about the Governor's proposed budget which includes reductions of more than 10% in 2010 and 12% in 2011 for the community colleges. The reduction of educational opportunities and services necessitated by the proposed budget will undermine the State's ability to prepare adequate numbers of students, particularly those facing loss of jobs, with the skills needed to find new employment opportunities. Therefore, the Board affirmed its commitment to the comprehensive mission that allows the system's collegiate institutions to serve the varying educational needs of diverse student populations.

The Community Colleges have reached record breaking levels of enrollment in each of the last 7 years with 51,105 credit students enrolled in Fall 2008. Throughout the calendar year another 40,000+ are expected to enroll in non-credit, skill building programs at the colleges. As Connecticut's economy has declined and joblessness has grown, increasing numbers of students are seeking the educational and support services offered by community colleges to obtain marketable skills, new jobs, and improved earning potential. In the face of drastic budget reductions and increasing student demands, the colleges will be severely challenged to continue serving those students who are currently enrolled or projected to enroll in both credit and non-credit programs.

Any enhancement of partnerships or expansion of existing high school relationships must be based on a strong financial foundation. The current environment of budget reductions, rescissions and retrenchment calls system and college capacity into question. Expanding educational opportunities for more students in college-level technical education must be recognized as a significant undertaking which will require a significant investment of resources. How will community colleges sustain services for their current students while at the same time undertaking to provide educational programs and services for more students particularly when community colleges are dependent upon tuition revenues, is a question that must be considered.

While the Board is interested in expanding educational opportunities for students, as an integral part of its mission, it believes that sustained investment in higher education is an investment in student success, in workforce and economic development. These investments are the true source of economic stimulus, job creation, and prosperity.

