

February 7, 2009

Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am unable to attend this hearing, and have asked Senator Roraback to read this letter about how Charter Oak State College has worked to help me.

My name is Elizabeth Allen. I am 53 years old and reside in North Canaan, CT. I retired from AT&T three years ago, after 31 years of employment, to pursue a second career in teaching art. I have always been very interested in art, but working in the corporate world left me little time to enjoy that passion. In making this career move, I felt I could combine my love of art, for what I had studied for many years, with the organizational and management skills that I had acquired and honed in my first career. I already held a B.S. in Management from Post College and an M.A.L.S. in Arts from Wesleyan University. I also had various credits from Paier School of Art and from the University of New Haven that were not attached to any degree.

With all of this behind me, after my retirement, I went back to school to get certified to teach. I enrolled in the University of Bridgeport in the Elementary Education internship program. I had an understanding that upon completion of the program I would receive my C.A.S. in Elementary Education and I then could cross endorse in Art, giving me a teaching license with a dual endorsement. Imagine my surprise when I received my license in Elementary Education and not in Art! According to the state regulations, I needed a full degree in Art, despite the fact that I had over 40 art credits completed.

Financially, I had been prepared to take the year and a half off from working to attend school full time. Although I do love being a student, I then needed to go back to work. I did not have the time to go back to school, nor at this stage in my life want to finance yet another degree. I took on long term substitute positions at the local elementary school while I decided my next move.

I was guided to Charter Oak State College and I was hopeful that they could pull my credits together and formulate an Art degree. I had heard that they could provide "Degrees without Boundaries". Well, Charter Oak did help me tremendously. They worked with the State Department of Education on my behalf and came up with a workable solution to my dilemma. I would only need to take 4 Art classes and the SDE would grant me my Art endorsement. I am currently taking four classes; two at Naugatuck Valley Community College and two online at Tunxis Community College. I should finally receive my certification this summer.

Without Charter Oak's help, I'm not sure what I'd be doing right now. Charter Oak's flexibility has provided me with an alternate path to my certification. In a time when peoples' issues often get lumped together into common buckets, Charter Oak did not do that with me. They took my isolated instance and worked diligently with the SDE for me, treating me as an individual. They are truly there to help that adult learner with the knowledge, to pull something together that traditional schools might not be equipped or willing to do. They offer guidance, distance learning opportunities, and/or alternative plans of action. This is essential in today's world with many adults juggling careers and families, and often whose jobs take them away from home. I am so happy that we have an institution like Charter Oak in our state. They really do care and will work to help.

Sincerely,

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