February 13, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Darlene Boyd. I am presently an adult learner student at Manchester Community College. My academic coursework is in the field of Addiction. I am a sophomore in the Drug Alcohol Recovery Counseling (DARC) Program and I am planning to graduate with an Associate Degree in 2009. I have just returned to college after a long absence due to personal and health issues. I realized that I needed to come back to school to fulfill the goals I've dreamt of pursuing in the field of behavioral health.

I am enjoying the experience of being a student again tremendously. I had forgotten that school provides such great satisfaction and fulfillment. My classes are challenging and demanding. Additionally, they have been a source of personal enjoyment, therapeutic and academic enrichment.

Today, I am a woman that has a new perspective on life. As a DARC student at MCC, I have had the opportunity to regain a new sense of direction, high self esteem and valuable insight and knowledge that has helped me to succeed in my studies.

The education I am receiving at MCC has helped in understanding the impact of addiction in individuals and families to prepare me to give back to society and to help those who are reaching heal their inner-most self.

The environment itself has been very good and the instructors are awesome and readily available, not the mention the other college staff who are just as supportive.

MCC has been a source of encouragement. **I LOVE MY SCHOOL! Will the 2.7 MILLION the Governor speaks of saving** actually serve its purpose?

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES DELIVERS A GOOD EDUCATION AND SERVICE SOCIETY.

Sincerely,

Darlene Boyd, Student

Manchester Community College

Student ID Number @ 00052142

Resident of Hartford, CT

February 13, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

Although I don't fully understand the world of academia, I can however share my point of view. I am a full-time student at Manchester Community College and I have been enrolled there since August of 2006. I will be receiving an associate's degree in the field of substance abuse as a drug and alcohol recovery counselor.

The comprehensive education I have had the auspicious opportunity to obtain at this institute of higher learning has been a blessing for my life and the lives of others I hope to assist once in my chosen field.

I strongly disagree with Governor Rell's outline to combine Connecticut's community colleges with Connecticut's technical schools creating a middle college. As an older student I want the experience of learning from my fellow students who also have a wide variety of life skills. This is not possible with students who are still in high school. They lack the maturity and wisdom that many adults already have acquired. The level of professionalism of the current faculty will be at risk should this proposal go through. No longer will there be funding to hire qualified professor's which as a result will impact the level of instruction the students receive. Accreditation is an important quality in being viewed as a skilled person of knowledge. I sincerely hope that you will consider this matter with great care for it is my opinion that this would be a mistake of great magnitude.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Slivinsky
Student, Manchester Community College
ID Number @00670316
Tolland, CT

February 12, 2009

Dear Appropriations Committee:

My spouse and I both obtained our A.S. degrees in the Connecticut Community College System after receiving our advanced educational degrees. Why? We both had different reasons that we would like to share with you. We hope this will help with your decision to provide adequate funding to the Community College System in this year's budget.

We have faced hard economic times before in the State of Connecticut in which many jobs were lost and people of our state had to learn new skills to remain employable. When there are hard economic times, the need for educational opportunities increases. People need to update their skills and/or learn new skills. They need to be able to obtain modern degrees/certificates in areas that will provide employable careers to support themselves and their families. The Community College System provides a vital link for the people in the State of Connecticut to allow them to adapt to changing times in order to remain employable and productive.

My spouse and I met while attending Central Connecticut State University in the mid 1970's. We studied to become music education teachers but after our four years of college, there were few full-time teaching jobs in music education upon graduation. To start a life and survive (and avoid moving back home with our parents), my spouse immediately enrolled in Capital Community College's Informational Technology program to earn a one-year certificate in Data processing. As a result, my spouse obtained a good-paying job in the state. The credit should be given to the Community College System because the programs it offered kept up with the times and provided the skilled employees that companies needed in Connecticut.

By the early 1990's, companies started to downsize. This included information technology staff. My spouse, then a Director of Information Technology with a Masters of Business Degree, recognized it was time to change careers and enter into the field that was of tremendous interest – nursing. In 1991, my spouse took a golden handshake from her business position (knowing that a layoff was in the near future) and enrolled in Capital Community College's nursing program. The need for nurses was emerging in the state. The Community College System provided excellent education and preparedness for the field. As a result of that education, my spouse now has a Master's of Science Degree from the Yale School of Nursing and is employed as an advanced practice nurse.

My story is somewhat different than my spouse's experience with the Community College system. I followed a career path in the area of Human Resources. In 1985, I obtained my Master's Degree in Management Science so that I could further my career in the Human Resource field. However, in the later 1980's, businesses at that time were being subjected to hostile takeovers and the company that I worked for was bought out.

It seemed that overnight most of my colleagues lost their jobs. I experienced the corporate takeover from start to finish and literally was the last employee that locked the company's door and turned the key over to the security guard station.

I needed to get my mind off of the hostile takeover experience and decided to enroll in a culinary program at Manchester Community College to learn how to cook professionally. Unexpectedly this Associate's degree opened a new career path for me because I had the combination of business skills in Human Resources and new knowledge in the Hotel Food Management field. Over the next 13 years I was able to use my new skills and have a continued successful career. Again, the credit should be given to the Community College System.

As a result of our education at Connecticut's Community Colleges, we have been able to remain in our beautiful state and contribute to the state's economy by purchasing a home, paying taxes and purchasing goods.

When making your budgetary decisions, keep the Community College System strong by adequately funding the educational services that provide our state with an employable, flexible workforce. Think about targeting new dollars into Community College System for programs such as training people for "green" jobs, high tech allied health positions, more nursing programs etc. so we have our workforce ready.

Through education, the State can continue to offer its constituents the opportunity to improve themselves in order to survive these difficult times by adapting to the changing needs of our State and this major economic down turn.

Respectfully Submitted,

Holly Foetsch and M. Zeh of Amston, Connecticut

Dear Legislature:

It's hard for a person to admit when they've had the wrong impression of something. Yet I've had to do exactly that. My decision to come to Manchester Community College was a last minute decision that I wasn't exactly thrilled about, to be honest. I doubted the educational caliber of this fine institution, which I deeply regret now. Many say community colleges aren't as good as four year universities. I wholeheartedly disagree with that statement. For me, MCC has been better than a four-year college. Even though MCC doesn't fit the traditional mold of a college - for example, on-campus housing isn't offered here - it still has a sense of community among its students. I believe the ability for anyone and everyone to attend MCC makes it the perfect candidate for abundant learning, from teachers and fellow students that are all ages and come from a variety of backgrounds.

Losing MCC and what it stands for would be devastating for the community and for me personally. Even though MCC doesn't paint the picture of a traditional college, it is still one. For many, it is the stepping stone, the nudge that they need to put themselves out there in the real world. It slowly allows the students to learn what college is all about. It also lets the students experience college but still be able to keep in touch with their lives outside of college instead of making them forgo everything they have. I believe that MCC should stay the way it is and be a stepping stone for adults of all ages.

It isn't just a question about the financial aspect of college either. Yes, college is expensive and the cost of education rises every year. Yet to be successful nowadays, a college degree is a prerequisite for a well paying job. Many can't afford to pay the tuition that the state and private universities charge so they choose a community college because in the end, the educational aspect is the same. The knowledge acquired is the same. The social aspect is the same. The only difference is the cost and that becomes a deciding factor for many about their choice of college. To eliminate that option would be devastating for the community.

Many people hold jobs while they earn their degrees so a community college is the ideal choice for them because it gives them the opportunity to get an education and have the means to pay for it as well. So in the end, students at a community college aren't as limited compared to students at a four-year institution. To force people to give up that choice of freedom would not end well for the community as a whole.

For many MCC is more than a college. It's the catalyst they need for the change required to succeed in whatever they wish to do. It would devastate all the students who are trying to make a change in their life for the better if they didn't have the option of doing it at MCC, or any other community college for that matter. For more than just the financial reasons, MCC should stay the way it is. For me personally, it was the nudge I needed to put myself out there and "find my calling." So I am eternally grateful for all that MCC has offered me, and I hope that MCC will continue to do that for future students for decades to come.

Sincerely,
Danish Rehman

Dear Gov. Rell,

The idea to make MCC part of technical schools, essentially turning them into grades 13 and 14 - will be taking away from what it means to be a community college student or a graduate. Many students who attend MCC are doing so because the cost of going to other schools is high, especially for all four years. Being able to get your general requirements done or graduating with an Associate's Degree is not only rewarding but also extremely beneficial in the long run. Being an MCC student and soon to be graduate myself, attending this school has enabled me to keep my part time job, save money, and get a solid education for a fraction of the cost. Not only has MCC helped me to discover what career path I want for my future, it has also provided me with solid opportunities to get ahead. I have been able to be a part of MCC's school newspaper, the Live Wire, for two years now. I have been able to build up my portfolio and learn from other individuals who have worked in the journalism field. Not only is MCC a great school for getting a solid education and experience, it also has a good student-to-teacher ratio which enables all students to get involved and ask questions which promotes a great learning environment. I strongly urge you to reconsider your reasons as to why you would like to change what MCC is and make it something else.

- Ashley Lang

Dear Gov. Rell,

My name is Jonathan Stankiewicz and I currently am enrolled at Manchester Community College, which is located in Manchester, CT. I have recently been informed of your new bill to impose a "Middle College" format on MCC. The state's other community colleges and the technical-vocational high schools. Robert Genuario, your budget director, said such a change would save the state $4 million over the next two years, according to an article in *The Hartford Courant.*

Now I understand $4 million is $4 million more our state will have for whatever it is you need the money for. But exactly how many Community College students do we have in CT? How can you expect to take two great programs and put them together in what seems a haphazard way? I know that I do not attend the other Community Colleges, but I am sure they are worried about your decision that you have recently made public.

This merger will not only affect the students we have now, but the students of the future. The cost of community colleges, which is a huge part of their enticement to new students, will rise due to your proposed idea. Some kids can barely afford to come here as it is and you want to raise the prices? That is what community college is all about: go to school - a good school, at that, for a lower cost so that you can prepare yourself for a 4-year school. Your idea could hinder thousands of students from not becoming students at all.

This will be a terrible idea Governor and I hope that it is not passed. My brother wants to attend MCC before he goes to a 4-year school to get his baccalaureate, but now he may rethink that idea because of this proposed plan. I certainly hope you change your mind and do not implement this bill. The number of transferrable classes will go down immensely. The whole point of the community college system is to not only providing the associate's degree, but to amass credits to go to a 4-year school. With the new proposal you will be greatly inhibiting that idea. And it's confusing for me because isn't that why we have community colleges: to allow us, the students, to go to school at a lower price, but still amass the greatly needed credits for our baccalaureate.

MCC means the world to me. I am the Assistant Editor for MCC's student run newspaper, the Live Wire and I love MCC. The opportunity that I have here to become someone great is undeterminable. I went to the Univ. of New Haven for a full year before I ended up at MCC because New Haven cost too much, $45,000 dollars for 4 years, to be exact. MCC offers me the opportunity at a great education and more preparedness then the Univ. of New Haven could have ever offered me. This Community College and the others in CT mean more to the students than you really think.

I think you need to reconsider this. Please do.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Stankiewicz
Email: Lacrossed89@yahoo.com