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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 9, 2009

TESTIMONY REGARDING HOUSE BILL NO. 6370:

AN ACT CONCERNING A MIDDLE COLLEGE SYSTEM

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman and distinguished members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present provide testimony in reference to Governor Rell's Bill, H.B. 6370: An Act Concerning a Middle College System.

Norwalk Community College (NCC) has been working during the past year to craft a stronger relationship with J.M Wright Technical High School (Wright Tech). Similar to our efforts with the Stamford and Norwalk Public Schools, we have engaged in a number of initiatives with Wright Tech designed to narrow the achievement gap. Through funding by the State of Connecticut for the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation (ConnCAP) program and College Pathway Initiative (CPI), NCC has involved faculty, staff and students from Wright Tech and other area high schools in an effort to improve the college-readiness of high school students.

As profiled in the January/February 2009 issue of *Change – The Magazine of Higher Learning*, NCC actively involves a wide range of community partners throughout Fairfield County in these efforts so that students attain the social supports necessary for success. NCC is headquarters for Norwalk ACTS for Children, a task force of community leaders representing over 50 community-based agencies and was selected to participate in Achieving the Dream, a nationwide initiative aimed at increasing the number of students who reach their educational and career goals, particularly low-income students, first generation college attendees, and students of color.

Our desire is to provide Wright Tech students with a pathway that will simultaneously prepare them for entry-level work in a chosen profession or trade, along with possibility of transfer to NCC. Throughout this endeavor, we will work with Wright Tech faculty and staff to create a competency-based curriculum that will focus on embedding the teaching of 21st century skills (<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>) within their programs of study. The Connecticut Community College's College of Technology will guide course and curriculum alignment in the technologies between NCC and Wright Tech.

NCC proposes to engage in comprehensive academic assessment and college advisement of Wright Tech students with the goal of remediating any learning deficiencies before they enter college. Subject to available funding, there will also be a student services component that will utilize a case management approach for student and career advisement, as developed under NCC's established UBS Student Success Center on the Norwalk Campus. In partnership with Wright Tech, NCC's Division of Institutional Effectiveness will oversee student assessment, aggregating Wright Tech students into cohorts for the purpose of analyzing progress and identifying impediments as they progress towards graduation.

Initial discussions have focused on developing joint programs in the following areas: Green Collar Technologies, which will build on NCC's existing programs in Architectural Engineering Technology, Construction Technology and the Connecticut Community College's U.S. Department of Labor Sustainable Operations Alternative and Renewable (SOAR) Energy Initiative; Entrepreneurship which is already part of NCC's Business Department and the College's Economic Security Program, which will leverage our existing partnership with Women's Business Development Center; Film Industry/Digital Arts where NCC has established a Film Industry Training Program with funding from the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), along with the College's existing programs in animation, computer graphics, arts and design; and Facilities Management, which will build upon NCC's programs in information technology, engineering, and project management.

In order to successfully bring this project to scale, design principles articulated by the Middle College National Consortium (<http://www.mcnc.us>) will be utilized. These guidelines for best practices will serve as the framework for assessing the feasibility of this project and for identifying the supports required for a successful partnership. Governing the relationship will be an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from business, industry, the trades, NCC, Wright Tech and other Fairfield County higher education institutions such as the University of Connecticut at Stamford and Fairfield University. A year of planning and preparation will be required prior to the opening of a revitalized high school by fall of 2010. It is critical that infrastructural improvements at Wright Tech begin immediately along with the identification of appropriate funding sources for planning and implementation.

I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to present this written testimony. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



David L. Levinson, Ph.D.
President