



*Testimony by Chancellor David G. Carter
Connecticut State University System
Committee on Executive and Legislative Nominations
Thursday, April 2, 2009*

I want to thank this committee for the opportunity to publicly support the nominations of **John Sholtis, Angelo Messina, and Theresa Eberhard-Asch** to the Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System.

As Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System, and before that as President of Eastern Connecticut State University for almost 18 years, I have had the opportunity to work with many outstanding and dedicated trustees on a range of issues. I can say without equivocation that the three individuals before you today - as well as **Ronald Pugliese**, whose nomination you will consider next week - are true professionals. Each of them operates with the best interest of students and the State of Connecticut uppermost in their minds, and they not only talk the talk, they walk the walk.

They share an unwavering commitment to the mission of the Connecticut State University System – accessible, affordable, high quality education – and strict adherence to their fiduciary responsibilities.

I have come to know them as individuals of great integrity, with a firm belief in civic engagement and giving back to the community, which has been evident often, as they freely give of themselves to do whatever is necessary to ensure that our students are afforded every opportunity to succeed.

Trustee Eberhard-Ash, as an officer of the board, has distinguished herself consistently. Her involvement and support of CSUS is extraordinary, and I have always been impressed with her unwavering dedication. Her background in education adds an important element to Board deliberations.

Trustee Sholtis has also brought a tremendous commitment to his work on the Board, and is making a significant contribution to our success. He has served with distinction on the Finance and Administration Committee as well as Academic Affairs.

Trustee Messina, the Chair of Audit Subcommittee, is another veteran and extremely effective Board member. He provides significant guidance and direction on critical issues, given his executive business management experience. And his expertise has never been more important.

In my view, each of these Trustees has earned favorable consideration for re-appointment to the Board of Trustees. Individually and collectively, they represent the finest that Connecticut has to offer, and the working relationships they have established accrue to the benefit of the students, faculty, and staff at Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State Universities.

As you are aware, 93 percent of the students attending the Connecticut State University System are from Connecticut, and 86 percent stay in Connecticut after graduation to begin their careers and contribute to the economic, intellectual and cultural well-being and quality of life in our state. Last year, we awarded a record number of degrees and certificates, and this year our full-time enrollment is at an all-time high.

Transfers from Connecticut Community Colleges have increased by 46% since 2001, and we are working together more closely than ever. In fact, later this month, here at the Capitol, we will have the formal signing of a system-to-system Transfer Compact that will ease the transfer of students who participate in this new program. In fact, this agreement was reached a full year ahead of our timetable.

We understand the changing demographics in Connecticut, and the implications they have for our state and its future workforce. As you know, 49 percent of our students are the first in their families to attend college. You may not know that since 2003, retention rates for Hispanic and African-American students have each grown by 8 percent, and the graduation rate for Hispanic students has increased by 14 percent during the past five years. Our recently revised first-year programs are making a difference in helping all students in the transition to university life, and that is especially true for students of color.

We are also working closely with our business community, as is reflected in their supportive comments earlier this week to the strengthened academic standards that the Board approved last month, to take effect in 2015. We are very cognizant of our state's workforce needs, and we are responding with academic programs in the STEM areas of science, technology, engineering and math, as well as nursing.

Our view is this: we need to work together, all across the pre-K through college education continuum to ensure that Connecticut students are college-ready and workforce-ready. We are doing just that, and we are finding enthusiastic partners throughout our state.

Even with increased student numbers, our Trustees recognize the fiscal constraints our state is facing, and they have acted decisively to direct the universities and the system office to curtail costs and reduce expenditures, without compromising the education we provide to our students. You are probably aware of the budgetary rescissions that we have planned for and absorbed, the positions being held vacant, and the decision to freeze salaries and reduce staff levels by 10 percent in the coming fiscal year.

I commend the Trustees before you for their leadership. They recognize the significance of the education these four universities provide to the future of our state, and with their continued service, I have every confidence that future is in good hands.

Thank you very much.