



**To: The Honorable Mary Ann Handley, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Roberta Willis, House Chair  
The Honorable Anthony Musto, Senate Vice Chair  
The Honorable Juan Candelaria, House Vice Chair  
The Honorable Dan Debicella, Senate Ranking Member  
The Honorable Pamela Sawyer, House Ranking Member  
Members of the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee**

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

**Re: Public Hearing Testimony re SB 45  
An Act Concerning Higher Education Remediation**

**Date: March 4, 2010**

Given the central role of Connecticut's Community Colleges in providing access to higher education for 52% of the undergraduate students enrolled in public higher education as well as the pathway to careers and continued higher education through guaranteed transfer to baccalaureate institutions, well integrated transitions with the sectors throughout the PK-20 education continuum are essential to the success of students and to the economic development of the state.

We would recommend that **SB 45, An Act Concerning Higher Education Remediation Programs** recommending a report on Developmental Education from the Department of Higher Education be advanced by means of a task force comprised of members representing the Community College System, the State Department of Education, and the Connecticut State University System. The taskforce would be tasked with developing a plan in collaboration with the work of the PK-20 Council **to improve the college readiness and academic success** of Connecticut's high school students to support their ability to enter, persist and complete studies at the post-secondary level.

**In developing the plan, the taskforce should consider:**

- aligned standards for high school graduation, college-level study, and National Common Standards
- strategies for early testing and remediation to address student needs and achievement gaps
- college-level opportunities, including early college experiences, and "bridge" programs to reduce the need for developmental education, address achievement gaps, and accelerate completion of degrees and certificates.
- collection and analysis of outcomes data throughout the educational and workforce development continuum.

**Background:**

The traditional community college commitment to access and to meeting student needs is challenged by the dramatic growth in enrollments (30% growth in headcount – 1998-2008) and the increase in the number of younger, full-time students (104% growth in Full-time Students 1998-2008) studying at

community colleges in recent years. The education requirements of the Information Age, the expectations of Connecticut's businesses and industries, a highly competitive job market, as well as the academic requirements for transfer and continued educational attainment also challenge us to prepare students to be successful at college-level work. Our students arrive at college with the hope of improving their skills, their career opportunities, and the quality of their lives, but they also bring disadvantages that can limit their potential for success. Only by addressing the myriad obstacles that face students when they enter a community college, including educational deficits and socioeconomic disadvantages, can the colleges effect positive change in the lives of the students they serve, improve graduation rates, and meet the needs of the State of Connecticut for an educated workforce.

As students matriculate at a community college they are required to take a placement examination to evaluate their level of preparation and to ensure that they are placed in an appropriate math or English course. The instrument used throughout the system is the College Board Accuplacer test, with other measures such as SAT scores, high school courses and GPA included in consideration for placement. Our Board of Trustees has mandated on-going research on the use of these assessment tools for effectiveness in predicting student success.

### **College Readiness**

Studies of Accuplacer scores on the national level reveal that as many as 60 to 70 percent of entering students taking the test across the nation, as well as in Connecticut, are underprepared to succeed in college-level Math or English, the building blocks of college curricula. During any given semester, an average of 25 percent of community college enrollments are in developmental education courses, outside of degree requirements but essential to successful program completion. Community college data reported to the General Assembly by the Department of Higher Education annually in Higher Education Counts: Achieving Results, shows enrollments in developmental math ranging from 16 percent to 20 percent between 2000 and 2007 with pass rates ranging from 47% to 51% in the same period. We have established a goal for 2011 within these performance measures of increasing the pass rate to 60 percent.

### **Student Success Initiatives**

To reach this goal and to enhance our efforts to serve the growing number of students who are unprepared to succeed in college-level courses and therefore unable to complete degrees or certificates, the Connecticut Community Colleges have over the years undertaken many efforts to meet and understand the needs of these students. Most recent is our participation in the national student success initiative Achieving the Dream, a grant-funded effort to expand opportunities for academic and career attainment for targeted student populations, specifically low income students, students of color, first generation college goers, and other groups traditionally underserved in higher education.