

**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Public Hearing – March 10, 2011
S.B. No. 1011 – An Act Concerning a Reorganization of
Connecticut’s System of Public Higher Education**

**Testimony of
Cathryn Addy, President, Tunxis Community College**

Good morning. I am Cathryn Addy, President of Tunxis Community College in Farmington, where I have had the honor of serving since 1993. As my colleagues are fond of reminding me, I am the senior president of the twelve of us. Connecticut is the sixth state in which I have worked as an educator but it is also the place I have been the longest. I have often joked that I suffer from the Stockholm Syndrome--I have identified with my captors and am therefore very happy here.

Regardless, the point is that I have worked in those six states with six different governance systems. Three states had locally controlled, county-based governance structures and local boards. In two of the states the boards were appointed and in one state the members of the board were elected. In another state the college reported to a local board but the bulk of its funding was controlled by 19 area school boards. Connecticut is the only state in which I have worked in a centrally governed system. Each and every structure has its strengths and its weaknesses, including Connecticut’s more centralized system. I have found great value as a president in the integrated structure that streamlines many back office-type functions and services seamlessly and cost effectively for students. Our system office manages important functions that we don’t have the resources or infrastructure to manage at the campus level. And I am very proud of the fact that other states are referencing our system financial aid data base that has encouraged students to attend full time because of the way their aid packages are determined (see attached article).

The truth is that all of us are in this community college education profession because we believe passionately in what we do and in the students we serve. Our focus always is on making sure that our institutions are doing the best we can, within the parameters we are given, to educate and to train those who will likely remain in Connecticut and be a part of the citizenry here for the indefinite future. It is an important task as well as a staggering responsibility.

It is clear to me that all of us--from Governor Malloy to our students-- talking about this issue of organization and governance of higher education want the same thing:

a way to keep higher education affordable, efficient, current, and meaningful. Beyond that, however, it is not clear exactly why we are being asked to change our structure. Is there a master plan for public higher education? Or a strategic direction that will help us achieve an overall goal for public higher education? In fact, have we ever even had the conversation that is so critical to ALL of us: what exactly is it that we expect from our institutions of higher education? Until that question is answered, it seems pointless to talk about how we are organized. As has been said by someone smarter than I am, "If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter how you get there." The presidents would all rather know where we are going first. Together we can then figure out the best way to get there. In a book by Tim Brown called Change by Design, he suggests that there are three basic components that lead to good design: it is feasible, or functionally possible within the foreseeable future; it is viable, or likely to be sustained; and it is desirable, or something that makes sense for people and to people. Brown's concept applies equally to the design of products or the design of systems. I would respectfully suggest that right now we cannot apply any of these elements to the proposed structure because our destination has not been clearly outlined either in these hearings or in the legislation supporting the changes.

The community college system already is working well here in Connecticut: we are efficient because we have historically been underfunded. We are accessible to those who need us the most because we have kept tuition as low as we could; we are creative and innovative because we have been committed to offering the kinds of programs that have led to jobs for our students as well as paths to additional education. Our mission is unique among the segments of higher education, as are many of our students. From the home schooled precocious teen, to the at-risk teen in a middle college high school, to the recent high school graduate who cannot afford college if not for us, to the displaced worker training for a new profession, to the 82 year old senior catching up on something he missed earlier in life, the students we have deserve our full attention and our best efforts. If we cannot articulate to them that the governance structure being proposed helps them fulfill their goals in some way, then what are we doing? We spend hours and days advising our students to have a plan, to know what they want to do at some point in the future so that we can help them get where they want to go. I believe that is good advice in this circumstance as well. We should first have a plan, an overarching goal for public higher education in Connecticut. When that is agreed upon, then all of us at the colleges will eagerly help to get there.

Meanwhile, our attention needs to be focused on the immediate budgetary circumstances that are so problematic. A change in governance right now could easily detract us from the things to which we need to be devoting our energy and creativity. In addition, for the community colleges we are talking about our ability to remain true to our mission. We are well beyond the point of cutting extraneous spending. Instead, we are at the point of considering limiting access to students because we won't be able to afford to provide the services and classes they need to be successful. Imposing a new governance concept on us to take effect on July 1 is unrealistic at best. We urge you first to identify the problem that is being solved, and then involve us in developing the solutions. None of us can afford to do it wrong, or in haste.

http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/03/03/california_community_colleges_encourage_full_time_enrollment_with_financial_aid

News

When More Costs Less

March 3, 2011, Inside Higher Education — by David Moltz

It's all how you do the math.

If a student at a California community college enrolls full time, tuition is \$624 a year. (California community colleges are very much on the low end of the tuition scale.) Enroll half time, and the cost is \$312. But leaders of California's community colleges are trying to promote a different kind of calculation. A student with minimal income or family wealth (the norm for many of the state's community colleges) could qualify for only a \$2,775 Pell Grant if enrolled part time, but a \$5,550 grant if enrolled full time. Pell Grants may be used for a range of student expenses, not just tuition. So such a student would end up with more money for life expenses by enrolling full time.

The California Community Colleges chancellor's office hopes that by showing its students this illustration of how much financial aid they leave on the table by attending part time, it can encourage more of them to enroll full time.

Jack Scott, chancellor of the California Community Colleges, discussed the strategy, which is part of a larger effort to improve persistence and graduation rates in the state's community colleges, in a recent interview with *Inside Higher Ed*. He said he got the idea from a successful initiative pioneered by the Connecticut Community Colleges a decade ago. And it only involves a subtle change in the way aid is packaged for students.

Here's how it works: instead of first asking students how many credits they think they will carry, financial aid officers create aid packages on the assumption that students are attending full time. While many students assume college will be more affordable if they attend part time, attending full time may be more financially viable than they realize. And rather than hope that students figure this out, the colleges will make this point directly.

There are about 1.8 million community college students in California. Around 61 percent of them attend part time, 29 percent of them attend full time and 10 percent are non-credit students, considered neither part nor full time. In 2008-09, 33.4 percent of the California community college students who received Pell Grants attended full time. That proportion increased to 39.8 percent in 2009-10 — a period during which some of the colleges have been trying this approach.

Scott said he believes that showing students the money they may be leaving on the table will make a lasting impression about the value of full-time attendance. The benefits are numerous, he said, and include the fact that full-time students are more likely to complete college. Scott is encouraging the development of a statewide system that would help financial aid officers at the state's 112 community colleges show their students this financial advantage in black and white.

Terri Carbaugh, the chancellor's spokeswoman, said that, according to a recent survey of the state's financial aid officers, 83 percent of them engage all students seeking financial aid by calculating awards based on full-time enrollment first, before hearing their intent, to show the net cost difference. Though she did not know the base from which it grew,

she said the chancellor's staff believes this percentage is a significant increase over past use of this practice. Ideally, she said, the chancellor wants all of the state's community colleges to adopt it.

"It's a very subtle difference in the method of packaging aid," Carbaugh said. "But it's effective. We think it can help us start to move the needle and help students understand that the more units they carry, the more aid they'll draw down."

Carbaugh noted that the chancellor's office is testing a public awareness campaign with the simple message: "Enroll full time. Get more aid." But, she said, this message does not always resonate with every student.

"It's easier to convince an 18-24 year old to enroll full time than it is an adult who is recently unemployed," Carbaugh said. "It's a harder sell for older students. They are open to enrolling full time, but they want more information. The burden then shifts to the system to prove the assertion that going to school full time can be cost-saving in the long run."

The chancellor's office will unveil a new website showing these sliding scale financial aid and net cost differentials, based on enrollment status and area of the state, in two weeks. This tool, Carbaugh said, could help encourage more adult students to attend full time.

Success in Connecticut

California got the idea for this different sales pitch from the Connecticut Community Colleges. When the 12 colleges in that system centralized their financial aid services under the system office in 2001, said Mary Anne Cox, the system's assistant chancellor, one of the strategies made commonplace at all of the institutions was encouraging full-time enrollment with aid money.

Cox explained that the system's centralized database helps package aid in such a way as to show students how much money they could be losing by attending part time.

"We're showing them that they can support their education financially beyond what they originally thought," Cox said. "It's encouragement."

The system's efforts have resulted in some significant enrollment changes. Cox noted that the system's overall headcount has grown by 42 percent since 2000-01, but its full-time enrollment has grown by 101 percent.

Also, since the changes in 2001, the number of students applying for and receiving aid has more than doubled. In 2008-09, about 63 percent of the system's students applied for aid, compared to 42.5 percent of community college students nationally. Cox noted that most of this increase comes from full-time students.