

**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's public hearing on S.B. No. 1011 - An Act Concerning a Reorganization of Connecticut's System of Public Higher Education.**

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Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee: Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Debra Emmelman. I am a professor at Southern Connecticut State University. I am speaking now not simply as a scholar and educator but as a citizen who is deeply concerned about the future of our country.

Governor Malloy's proposal to reorganize and reallocate resources for higher education by linking funding to performance measures *sounds* both practical and commendable. On closer inspection, however, there are *many* good reasons to doubt the reliability of this proposal.

To begin, high scores on achievements tests that presumably measure learning outcomes *and* determine what schools, programs, and/or teachers will be rewarded with funding is equivalent to instituting "No Child Left Behind" in the colleges and universities. I imagine this would be okay if such programs actually worked. However, there is no evidence to date that it does. Moreover, there is evidence that such pressures on educators result in "teaching to the test" so that students learn NOT to think outside the box, but instead learn only what someone else has determined is the "correct" answer.

And who determines what is the correct answer? Consider the 16<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Church's emphasis on what is correct as applied to Galileo's research. Is this really what we want in a college education?

Second, Governor Malloy's proposal to reallocate resources to college programs by measuring the extent to which programs prepare students for employment is misguided as well as dangerous. Education, especially higher education, is not and should not be perceived as something we do solely for business. Instead, it is something we do to produce thoughtful and responsible citizens. This requires providing students with a broad background in various disciplines as well as instructing them in the importance and techniques of critical thinking. I shudder to think what our future might look like if we fail to teach students that there is nothing more to life than making money. How can we possibly expect to rely on them when we need them to make well-reasoned decisions regarding our family, our community as well as our nation's welfare?

Measuring education through retention and graduation rates is bound to have similar consequences. In the past (and I truly hope this is not still going on!), many schools in the lower levels employed the concept of "social passing". This meant that students were passed from grade to grade regardless of the quality of their work. I am sure this technique improved both retention and graduation rates. It did not, however, improve the quality of education or students' abilities to *responsibly* execute their jobs. As college instructors begin to feel less secure in their positions because their promotion, tenure and job security in general rely increasingly on such measures, I strongly suspect grade inflation, along with inflated retention and graduation rates, will be rampant. Is this what we really want to know when we rely on someone to provide us services for which a college degree is required?

Finally, Governor Malloy's proposal to institute greater "accountability" in colleges and universities through measurable outcomes actually shifts control over university education from specialized scholars and programs to more peripheral administrators. These "assessment" administrators will require college instructors, who are already struggling to keep up with their teaching loads, to provide preliminary reports to them so that they can compile and present reports to other administrators who will ultimately present the reports to members of our state government for so-called accountability purposes. As may be obvious, Governor Malloy's proposal will not only distract from the very activity of teaching that he hopes to encourage but also create another layer of the very needless bureaucracy that he hopes to reduce.

Thank you for your time!