

My name is Larisa McGrath. I am a 22-year old student from Norwich, Connecticut. I am single and live with my mother and sister in a small two-bedroom apartment. I have been attending Three Rivers Community College for three and a half years, ever since I graduated from high school.

I had never dreamed of attending any institute of higher learning until my senior year of high school. My ultimate goal is to get a well-paying job in any sort of academic environment, such as a professional tutoring center, a college, or a library. I have not yet decided what I want my subject of focus will be, but I do know that I would like to teach and help others, as TRCC has helped me. My ultimate major is still undecided, so I need to take my time to get a firm grasp on my abilities and interests.

Aside from me, no one in my family has a college degree. Also, all of those in my family, myself included, are non-drivers. The combined income of my mother and I in 2010 did not even break \$20,000. Long story short, I live in a low income family with either the city bus, or my own two feet as transportation.

This makes finding a job and attending any other institute besides TRCC tremendously difficult. TRCC is within walking distance of my home. Also, my pell grant covers my tuition, as well as my books. I am also eligible for work study, and can work a maximum of 20 hours with no paid sick days, no paid holidays, and no benefits. I work as a tutor. That is my only job.

I implore all to whom this concerns not to demand raises in tuition, nor to cut services, such as the Tutoring and Academic Success Center, from TRCC. The only reason I can attend TRCC as a student is because of my pell grant. The only reason I have a job is because the tutoring center was the only work study job available to me, as well as the only job I could find in pretty much all of Norwich, though not for lack of applying, and reapplying, and reapplying.

As is, I cannot afford to attend Eastern Connecticut State University, one of the least expensive 4-year colleges in the area, without the threat of walking out ear-deep in debt. I attempted to live on campus and attended classes full-time for one semester in the Fall of 2010, and opted out while my debt only came to a manageable \$1,750. Until I can drive and find a second job, I cannot afford to go to ECSU, point blank. I need TRCC, and I need it as is.

Think twice before putting pressure on the community colleges to raise their tuition and cut their services. All it will do is drive people away from a higher education, and there simply is not enough McDonald's and Wal\*Mart to go around, especially in Connecticut where jobs have gone the way of the dinosaurs. Also, if student workers get pay cuts, or get laid off, all that will do is drive up unemployment, which is counterproductive in a consumer-dependent country. Think twice. Please. Do not threaten my education. Do not threaten my job. I want to teach. The knowledge I am seeking gradually will benefit others. In fact, it already does, when those I tutor in Spanish, for example, come back and tell me that they have gotten A's and B's on their tests. Do not drive me to go seeking welfare, or unemployment checks. That is what a tuition hike and service cut could come to, which would only hurt us all. I am not the only one in this boat either. Think of all of the people like me, but who DO have gas, car maintenance, and commuting to think about. Think twice.