

February 28, 2011

Joshua Flores  
5 Driscoll Drive  
Bristol, Connecticut 06010

Appropriations Committee  
General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Joshua Flores. I am a graduate of Western Connecticut State University with a B.A. in political science and an M.A. in History. From 2007 to 2010 I was the Graduate Assistant and Coach to the nationally ranked debate team at Western, the Roger Sherman Debate Society. Prior to that I have over ten years experience as a student, counselor, and site coordinator to Central Connecticut State University's ConnCAP and Upward Bound programs. Between 2000 and 2006 I assisted in college admissions, financial aid, and academic and personal counseling to over 500 low income, minority students from New Britain High School who were, like myself, the first in their family to go to college. Many of those students went onto excellent state institutions like the CSU schools and UConn but prestigious private universities such as St. Joseph's College and Fairleigh-Dickenson University.

I am writing today in opposition to the proposed merger of the CSU and Community College systems as well as the ten percent across the board cut to all CSU schools for the next biennial budget.

At first I had intended to pass on the opportunity to testify on this matter. As a recent alum I felt the current situation while difficult was better represented from the university's perspective by the current students. But after comments made by DHE commissioner Michael Meotti that UConn should be spared as harsh a measure because it attracts a "different kind of student" I felt compelled as an alum, a taxpayer, and a citizen to respond.

Among fellow alumni I have gone to school with many have gone onto prestigious careers in both the public and private sector. A fraternity brother who is a congressional aide in Washington D.C., another a successful meteorologist. A classmate who works for the United Nations, another the Royal Bank of Scotland. One debate partner pursuing her PhD from

the University of Massachusetts, another managing a hospital in Sudan. These are just a sampling of the "kind of students" that a CSU school produces.

Appropriations cuts equal tax increases on students. Higher tuition and fees make it more difficult for more economically disadvantaged students to afford let alone complete a college education. More cuts in teaching means less advanced classes and fewer professors. And the statistics are there for all of us to read. While UConn may be more prestigious I would ask each of you which one contributes more to the state and local economy. CSU schools are a vital part of their communities. Eroding their funding as well as their local autonomy devalues their contribution in academic and community service to the towns and cities they are a part of.

And while I am supportive of the Governor's moving forward on capital improvements like CSUS 2020 I am fearful that a new building without the intellectual strength behind it serves no purpose. Our campuses may look good on the outside but are useless if the inside is rotten.

Regarding the proposed administrative merger, I am also deeply concerned about the lack of adequate and equal student representation on the proposed Board of Regents. As a former Student Government member myself, I take great pride in an institution like Western that values student rights and what professor Harold Schramm once describe to me as a sense of "healthy disrespect." As a public institution students have a fundamental right of democratic participation and voice in the management of their affairs on all issues at all levels of government. Cost effectiveness and the top down decision making of a large, potentially cumbersome bureaucracy cannot come at the cost of due process. But don't take my word for it; ask the professors who taught me.

Being a graduate of Western gave me not only a sense of pride but a desire to give back through my career. I chose Western not for its basketball team but for its academics. My parents stressed the importance of an education to building a professional career and providing a better life for myself than they had had. I would hope that you will do the same for the many other students there today.

I urge the committee to reject the Governor's recommendations.

Sincerely,

Joshua Flores