

#10
Pg 3
Line 17

I am here now *not* as a student of the Connecticut system of Higher Education, nor am I here as the elected representative of nearly 50,000 other students in the Community College system. I am here to speak of the quality and value of the education that our state offers. Our higher education system has been promoted by many for over a decade as offering the some of best possible education in the state, country and the world. We have become worthy of these praises by having affordable tuition, outstanding student services and superior professors and instructors. The students who attend our schools are some of the best that our nation has to offer. With an ever-expanding student population in every institution of higher education, the future of our education system, and our state, looks to become even brighter.

Many of our Representatives in this state have completed programs using the very education offered here. They are examples of the quality of education that can be received. They, of all people, recognize the very schools that are going to be changed for the worse should funding be cut. They, being alumni of Connecticut higher education, can choose to either cripple the very foundation upon which they built themselves, or they can strengthen it. Connecticut shouldn't invest *less* in its education; it should invest *more*. In a time where businesses are looking for more qualified technicians to invent and maintain machine technology, hospitals seeking better trained personnel to heal the sick and wounded, biotechnology companies searching for the best scientists to bring new and clean sources of energy to the world, and the future of this country looking for the brightest scholars to lead us out of any hardship we may face, Connecticut must set the standard in education as it always has.

Where states everywhere are cutting funding for their programs, raising tuition at unprecedented levels and slashing financial aid available to students, Connecticut must act as a beacon to students across the nation and world, saying out loud, "we are proud to invest in the future of this state and our country in these dark times. When everyone else says *no* to education, we say *yes*." Where people are looking to complete their Associates, Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate Degree, where they are looking to get a job, raise a family and live their lives is going to be a place that embraces higher education. Businesses are going to look for states that endorse higher education and have the best institutions. Connecticut has already been recognized for all of these. To ensure that the state will grow even stronger into the next decade and beyond, we must say "yes" to higher education.

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