

My name is Janice Marie Crystal and I come before you to express my opposition to the proposed budget reductions in the Governor's budget for the Community Colleges.

My community college, Naugatuck Valley Community College, has very special meaning to me indeed. It has changed my life in so many wonderful ways. Actually it has changed my entire family's life as well!! In 2005, I graduated from NVCC with an Associate in Science degree. I graduated from the registered nurse program. I found employment even before I graduated from the program. I went right into an acute care setting at an area hospital. Even though I was nervous to start I felt more than ready to embark on my career based on the intensive clinical experiences that I had, the training that I received from the experienced teachers, and the support from my fellow peers in the program. I entered a work atmosphere which consisted of many nurses that received their education from four year colleges not only from Connecticut but outside of the state as well. Even though my nursing education only took two years in length it was a very, very intense two years. What made my schooling experience so special was that I was thirty-eight years old when I started the program. There were so many plusses to entering college at that time of my life. The college was close to home and I was able to make it to school after my children boarded their school bus and I was home when they came home from school. The college tuition was affordable. It would have been impossible for me to go back to school if I had to take out a loan. Another reason that Naugatuck Valley worked for me was because it was so age diverse. There were so many other moms, in my own age group, attending college.

In 2009 my son was also interested in attending NVCC, specifically, the information technology program. He saw what a great experience I had at the college and he also knew that a new technology wing was being constructed. While I looked at the course selection catalog along with him, I saw a new program called the DARC program. DARC stands for Drug and Alcohol Recovery Counselor. After speaking with my advisor I found out that not only could I continue working as an RN but I could also incorporate counseling. In June 2010, my son graduated with a certificate in IT while also being employed at the college's help desk. In the fall of 2010, he transferred to DePaul University where he is now continuing his education and is also gainfully employed as an IT intern. He is looking forward to working on a Master's degree in programming and I am now interested in a master's degree program for psychology. And would you believe now that my youngest son, a high school senior is looking to attend NVCC in the fall of 2011 for either IT or radiology??

If my community college wasn't affordable to our family none of these wonderful and exciting life changes could have happened!! If my community college didn't have such knowledgeable and experienced professors our lives would have been unchanged! If this institution wasn't conveniently located and did not have day, evening, and weekend classes as it currently offers, I would not be able to help all of the patients and clients that I help every time I work!

I am just one story of a mom getting back into the workforce after raising her children and making a dream come true. Please let these dreams continue for others. If tuition continues to increase due to the severity of the budget cuts and if the teachers are also cut from their amazing teaching positions, there will be many who will not be able to fulfill their dreams. A five percent cut to funding to our Connecticut Community colleges could mean a dream in someone's life unfulfilled. Please do not take away quality affordable education in Connecticut.

Thank you.