

February 28, 2011

To the Members of the Appropriations Committee:

We members of the Connecticut State University community appreciate the careful consideration you are dedicating to appropriating state funds in difficult times, in a manner which best ensures Connecticut's well being, now and in the future.

I am both an alumna of Southern and a member of the faculty, and I have lived in Connecticut for thirty-six of my forty-one years. In the fall of 2008, I came to Southern for the first time as a full-time graduate student in the Master of Science in Environmental Education program. I chose SCSU because of the expertise, energy, and experience of the faculty, the small class sizes, the affordable price, and because community engagement is emphasized and infused into academic programming and student life.

Precisely because of the structural advantages of SCSU's academic program—the above mentioned small classes, energetic and expert faculty, and the emphasis on engagement and community, I gained while I was a student not only content knowledge regarding current environmental issues, but also leadership and communications skills which I would not have in a larger, more impersonal setting. Because of Southern CT State University's structure, I was reawakened to the importance of community. There is a proverb that says if we want to go fast, we can go alone, but if we want to go far, we need to go together.

My capstone project included serving on SCSU's Sustainable Climate Committee and collaborating with the Director of ECSU's Sustainable Energy Institute to write up Southern's Climate Action Plan as part of the Presidents Climate Commitment. The plan, initiated in 2003 and formalized in 2007, integrates a long-term strategy to make Southern highly energy efficient, to introduce renewable energy production on campus, and to infuse conservation of all resources, energy included, into campus community and academic life. In helping write this report, I learned on my feet, repeatedly and often, that there are ample and creative ways to substantially reduce operating and purchasing costs through increased resource efficiency and conservation. Return on investment is quick, or in the case of conservation, free. Proactively developing and implementing these measures in a strategic and well-planned way provides means to reducing costs while preserving, and even enhancing students' educational experiences.

While resource efficiency and conservation alone will not in themselves reduce SCSU's budget to the extent needed, cost-cutting measures must not compromise the quality of academic programming and student opportunities for development. The majority of CSU graduates remain in Connecticut for their adult lives. They are the foundation of our future as a state—our workforce and our communities. A strong base of well-trained college graduates benefits everyone who lives in Connecticut, and reduces the likelihood that our citizens will need state financial aid like welfare.

We in the CSU community want to do our part to contribute to fiscal solutions for Connecticut in these unprecedentedly difficult times. We ask, however, that you, members of the Appropriations Committee, as well as your fellow members of the State Legislature, carefully consider cuts to CSU budgets so that as a state, we can continue to "heat the house without burning the furniture."

Sincerely,

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