



Testimony by Dr. Michael Sampson
Southern Connecticut State University

Before the Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
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Good morning, Senator Bye, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. For the record, I am Michael Sampson, Dean of the School of Education at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today.

I would like to comment briefly today regarding Senate Bill 928, *An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation*. We all are of the opinion that information gathering about teacher training programs is very important, and I would be honored to sit at the table to help frame the questions, because we at Southern (and at the other universities as well) are engaged in efforts to revise and continually improve our programs to meet the needs of Connecticut's public school students.

The bill calls for a study of teacher preparation training and requirements employed by public institutions of higher education to determine:

Their consistency

These programs are already remarkably consistent with each other, because they speak to the certification standards in the State of Connecticut and they are all accredited by NCATE, whose standards demand that students are prepared to enter the classroom ready to teach and meet the needs of K-12 learners. This is achieved via early field experiences for education majors, student teaching, and courses that address the needs of public school learners.

In addition, we follow the State Board of Education's Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) when developing our assessments. "CCT presents a comprehensive view of an accomplished teacher. It embodies the knowledge, skills, and competences that teachers need to ensure that students learn and perform at high levels. These standards reflect current research and thinking about the mission of schooling and the job of teaching."

Appropriateness in research based reading instruction and content areas

Each of the universities has reviewed its curriculum in reading instruction and has made revisions that better equip teachers to help students succeed in reading. All four of the Universities in the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) have shown improvement in the scores on the reading comprehension test for beginning teachers.

The effectiveness of graduates

To understand the effectiveness of our graduates on the classroom, we conduct employer surveys to ask principals and school leadership about the effectiveness of our teachers in their teaching performance. We also do alumni surveys to obtain data we use to improve our programs.

The question about the ability of graduates to provide “postsecondary remedial education” is a very interesting one. By definition, courses deemed as remedial by the universities cover material that should have been covered in high school. Therefore, if a teacher is qualified to teach mathematics or English at the high school level, that teacher is most certainly qualified to teach “postsecondary remedial courses” – since the content of those courses is high school level. Our Galileo project at Southern is working on this alignment as our university faculty meet with public school faculty.

In addition to participating in the discussion of reform as a partner, we also have been taking steps at ushering in change in the arena of teacher preparation to better align with the districts to which we send our graduates.

At Western Connecticut State University, a pilot curriculum reform project is well underway, in collaboration with the Bethel and Danbury school districts, precisely to better meet the needs of those schools with graduates of the programs at Western.

At Southern Connecticut State University, we are beginning a new professional development school partnership this summer with an institute for New Haven teachers. The institute will be led by 12 experts in classroom teaching and will be enhanced by four major keynote speakers. In the fall of 2011, Southern faculty and student teachers will be infused into three New Haven elementary schools. Southern faculty and New Haven teachers are writing new curriculum that will better meet the needs of urban learners.

At Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), new initiatives are underway at the New Britain and the Hartford Public Schools. The Hartford Board of Education accepted the James H. Naylor CCSU Leadership Academy as a new school design in February. This is a professional development school that prepares students, teachers and professionals in training using current research and best practices to be leaders in classrooms, schools and communities.

At Eastern Connecticut State University, an early childhood center on campus provides education majors access to children, allowing them immediate application of teaching techniques.

These exciting projects will help to broaden and enrich a statewide discussion on teacher training reform, and the growing call for education reforms being spearheaded by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

As a side note, the bill requires that the Department of Higher Education study these issues, and we would respectfully recommend that since the State Department of Education approves teacher preparation programs, they also be included as part of the discussion.

I hope that this information is helpful to your deliberations on the proposed bills before you today. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Connecticut State University System. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.