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Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's public hearing on S.B. No. 1011 - An Act Concerning a Reorganization of Connecticut's System of Public Higher Education

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee: Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today. Let me start off by saying I am in favor of the idea of reorganizing higher education, particularly the elimination of the CSUS system office, but the proposed bill has major flaws like the ability to transfer 15% of one campus's budget on a moment's notice. Since other will undoubtedly focus on was is in the Bill, I'll testify to an issue completely left out of the bill that I am compelled to address.

One major flaw in the proposed bill is that it currently does not give the proposed Board of Regents the power to limit individual university expenditures on non-academic endeavors of State universities. For example, consider the D1 athletic programs at UConn and CCSU. The current Bill should mandate that colleges with athletic programs regularly and fully disclose to students the amount of student fees and student tuition dollars that are being diverted to fuel NCAA athletic programs (and other non-academic activities) instead of academics. Let me tell you why this oversight is important.

As can be seen from a USA Today NCAA finance database for the 2008 academic year, CCSU's D1 athletic program had a cost of \$11.2 million dollars; however a significant portion of the operating expense for the program came from "Direct Institutional Support" at \$8.5 million dollars. When 76% of an \$11 million dollar cost for D1 athletics comes from the sources that should be used in academics then how much is too much? Who should decide this? Who should monitor this?

The proposed legislation should allow the Board of Regents oversight when it comes to how much a University can directly support its D1 athletic program aspirations.

Where does this "Direct Institutional Support" come from?

It comes from students... and possibly even from the State via tax-payers.

Every semester at CCSU, full-time students are charged a required fee called the General Fee. The description for the general fee is that it: "supports costs for the operations of the Student Center, gymnasium, intramurals, student ID, intercollegiate athletics, accident insurance, general operation of and mortgage payment for parking facilities." For Fall 2008, the General Fee for CCSU's ~8,200 full-time students was \$1,088. Assuming that the Spring 2009 enrollments were comparable, then the whole academic year brought in about \$18 million dollars with this fee.

It seems logical that CCSU could use \$8.5 million of the \$18 million collected from the General Fee to pay the entire amount listed under "Direct Institutional Support". This would represent about 47% of the General Fee fund being used to support D1 athletics. However, it is not clear that CCSU does this and it certainly is not communicated to students routinely and clearly.

Most likely, CCSU might not be specifically earmarking the money in the General Fee and instead it might be pushing the General Fee into the University's general operating fund to pay the entire amount listed under "Direct Institutional Support". Many other universities do this (Change article). The University's general fund comes from several sources including State allocation of tax-payer money and student tuition and fees.

Regardless of which process is used, students have a right to know what percentage of their fees and what percentage of their tuition is being used to balance the growing expenditures of a University's D1 athletic program.

The proposed legislation should give the Board of Regents power to mandate that Universities disclose how much of a student's fees and tuition are being used to supplement D1 athletic expenditures.

UConn's situation is similar but much less pronounced than CCSUs. In 2008, UConn collected nearly \$8 million dollars in student fees for D1 athletics. However, it still required \$5.5 million dollars of "Direct Institutional Support" to balance its programs' \$58.5 million dollar program. Again students have the right to know and someone off-campus should monitor and decide how much is too much.

What's proven is that spending on athletic programs is rising at an alarming rate continued to expenditures on academics even during these days of cutbacks (Knight Foundation). The same sort of fiscal responsibility that aimed to save 3 million by closing the CSUS system office and led to this legislation can be applied in a much larger scale to D1 athletic programs that have gone largely unchecked and are still growing in cost despite the recession... and have been funded by either students, tax-payer money, or both.

Final thought: The simple fact that students take out student loans to cover fees and tuition means they are taking out a loan in part to subsidize our State Universities' D1 athletic programs. Over five years, a back of the envelop calculation indicates this amounts to possibly \$2,000 per student (most likely higher) and is undoubtedly rising due to lower State allocations. Students have the right to know how much of their tuition and fee dollars are being used and someone has to stop the maddening, unregulated D1 arms race.

Sources:

a) USA Today: NCAA Finance Database: <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/ncaa-finances.htm>

- b) Knight Foundation: <http://www.knightfoundation.org/dotAsset/367132.pdf>
c) Change article: <http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2011/January-February%202011/game-change-full.html>