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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.

I am an assistant professor at Southern Connecticut State University, where I teach in the Anthropology Department and lead the Forensic Science minor. I also vote in every election.

I would like to explain why I am against Governor Malloy's proposal to merge Higher Education and in doing so highlight what I think makes CSU special.

I am disturbed by the way this merger has been "sold" as being good for Higher Education, and yet UConn is excluded from the reorganization. If it is indeed good for Higher Education, why wouldn't UConn be included? Well, one might argue, UConn has its own mission and identity that shouldn't be combined with the other parts of Higher Education.

So does CSU. So do the community colleges. Each constituent of Higher Education has its own mission and identity and these need to be recognized and protected, not jumbled together in a single "mega-agency".

One of the unique traits of the CSU system is that students work one-on-one with their professors in ways that are unheard of at research universities. Since I joined the Southern faculty four years ago, I have taken students with me each summer for international research in Peru. I also bring students to national conferences and conduct weekend trips to museums and other educational resources.

Through these experiences and rigorous coursework on campus, my students learn to think critically, problem-solve, and work collaboratively. At Southern students gain vital preparation, not just in direct job training but in the life-long skills necessary to innovate and create jobs.

This merger will undermine the unique identities, missions, and educational experiences provided by each individual institution. It is also a bad idea for financial reasons. The Minnesota experience tells us that a merger of this type will not result in cost savings; in fact, the merger is likely to be quite costly.

In our commitment to Higher Education, we must recognize that this merger will not help us achieve our goals. Thank you for your time and careful consideration of these matters.

Dear Representative Willis,

First, let me thank you again for all your efforts on behalf of the CSU System in curtailing the malfeasance and misdirection of funds and power at our central office last year. I was the person whom my representative, Peter Villano, quoted in the New Haven Register, and this along with the actions you directed in helping us keep money and focus on education have renewed my faith in representative democracy. But the mission is, of course, never over.

I have been a professor at Southern for 17 years and am a career teacher who first taught remedial reading, then high school English and math. I understand the importance and missions of all levels of education, and I have the greatest respect for community colleges (at which many of my friends and former students work). However, since I have been at Southern, I have seen it transform into a full-blown university with nationally-known scholars and an increasingly-talented student body. I myself spearheaded the effort to get the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at Southern, the only full-residence MFA in the state, and a program that is serving many CT residents and attracting out-of-state residents as well. We are a university, and in order to preserve our mission as educators and researchers at a university--an endeavor that goes hand in hand with being best prepared to teach--we need a central office that will act as our advocate in articulating our mission as the institution of higher education which teaches people who remain in Connecticut. Your efforts to reshape that central office are the restart of making it the appropriate sized and focused institution, and I think the next step is to streamline it, while keeping it autonomous and solely focused on how to better CSU's educational and research missions.

I am originally from Louisiana and graduated from LSU and the University of Alabama, but I love Southern and its students more than those alma maters'. I believe we as a faculty have done hard, continuous, caring work to build a wonderful university and I am hopeful you will support us fully in our continuing mission.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do! See you at the hearing on Thursday.

If possible, I would like this email to be entered as testimony.

Best,
Tim Parrish