

Testimony re: S.B. 1011, an act concerning reorganization of CT's system of higher education

Senator Beth Bye and Representative Roberta Willis:

We have been briefed on the Governor's plan for reorganizing public higher education and specifically his proposal for a new Board of Regents that would have responsibility for Charter Oak State College, along with CSU and the Community Colleges. Since more than 50% of Charter Oak graduates have Community College credits on our transcripts and since many have taken courses at the State Universities, we have a great affinity for all of Connecticut's higher education institutions and we recognize the role they play in Connecticut's higher education arena. Therefore, we support the development of a state-wide plan for higher education. We believe that a master plan for public higher education would increase transparency between state institutions, enhance flexibility, create efficiencies, and improve graduation rates.

Many of us had a hard time earning our degrees because our initial programs were not flexible enough to account for work and family demands, didn't provide us with sufficient advising, or simply cost too much. We all found Charter Oak to be our solution, offering the right degree at the right time for the right price.

And that is why we are concerned when we hear and read that Charter Oak may be consolidated with other institutions of higher education or with the Department of Higher Education. Charter Oak already does all those things the consolidation hopes to accomplish, and it does them very well. In fact, the College is noted for its flexible credit transfer policies, online course delivery that fits into adult schedules, the lowest priced baccalaureate program in the state, and the second highest graduation rate after UCONN. Charter Oak is one of Connecticut's higher education successes. Charter Oak is the only college in the state designed specifically, by our state legislators, to serve adult students. We have been to other colleges where the needs of adult learners are not primary. At Charter Oak, adult learning is all they do – we are not an “add-on” or an after-thought to traditional programs. Quite simply, Charter Oak is the only college in the state to cater to the needs of the adult student in the workforce.

So as your plans for re-organization are worked out, please be sure that Charter Oak remains a separate college so that it can continue to be the adult friendly, flexible, and cost effective solution that it already is. And while you are re-organizing, seriously consider making Charter Oak State College the focal point for all adult-focused education in Connecticut's public higher education system.

Respectfully submitted,
The Charter Oak State College Alumni Association
Carlo Esidore, President (resident of Portland, CT)