

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and distinguished members of the Higher Education Consolidation Oversight Committee. My name is Dr. George Kain, and I am an associate professor of Justice and Law Administration at Western CT State University; I am also the AAUP Grievance Officer for the local chapter of our AAUP at WCSU. I am here today to speak about H.B. 5030 and its effort to transfer General Education core courses from the community college system to the CT State University system. Let me start by saying that I applaud the legislative effort to streamline education in this regard, but I am concerned that the legislature needs to be aware of the complexity of this process, and how to best accomplish this important effort. Moves such as these MUST rely on the heavy involvement of the faculty of our educational institutions, whose primary responsibility is curriculum development. To effectuate this transfer without having large input from faculty who teach these general education courses will undoubtedly set our students up to fail. I would strongly urge this committee in its effort to draft this important legislation, to provide for a mechanism- perhaps an ad hoc committee that involves for example, at a minimum, 3 general education faculty members from each of the 4 CSU universities, to provide the vital input necessary to bring about the changes needed to make this a truly "seamless" transfer- and that this committee should report to the newly formed Board of Regents. This is critical to the success of this venture, since it is clear that revisions will need to be made to the content of courses offered at the community college level, because the CSU system is the receiver of students educated at the community college level. Without this important mechanism, community college students may very well enter the CSU system without the requisite knowledge to be successful in the CSU system. To validate this assertion, I suggest the comparison be made that a law school would not change its admission criteria to fit a particular undergraduate university's curriculum offerings nor would they merely accept students based on the fact that a series of courses were completed at the undergraduate level. A potential law student must still fulfill all the admission criteria, including a rigorous LSAT exam. Although I'm not suggesting that an exam be given to students transferring to the university system, I am suggesting that we need to insure that students at the community college level are being properly prepared for those educational demands which await them at the university level.

I would also suggest that the aggressive time frame for implementation of this project- as suggested from what I have seen, in some cases as early as this summer- is unrealistic and that an accelerated effort to effectuate these changes will also ultimately lead to confusion and worse, student failure. The collaborative effort between the CSU system and the community colleges will be a daunting task for all involved, and to move this process too quickly will result in potential problems which may well delay student success and ultimately, delay their graduation. If our goal is to indeed increase the likelihood that our students will be more academically prepared to enter our workforce, a project not carefully planned out for their success will potentially destroy this effort. Students pay enough already for their tuition and fees. If they were to fail due to a hastily formed plan, it could conceivably end up costing them more money if they fail courses at the university level and need to take them again.

Again, I am not arguing against this proposed plan and legislation- I am only saying that it must be drafted in a time frame realistic to insure its success; that the decision making must involve the key players in general education-our faculty; and promulgated through a process implemented to insure that sound policy decisions are made which enhance student learning so that our students don't fail.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you on this important issue.

George F. Kain, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
AAUP Grievance Officer,
Division of Justice and Law Administration
Western CT State University
Danbury, CT
kaing@wcsu.edu