



Testimony by Dr. Jack W. Miller, President
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Before the Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee
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Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Rowe, Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and members of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments for your study on *Public Higher Education Involvement in State Urban Issues*.

Let me begin by affirming that community engagement is integral to Central Connecticut State University's (CCSU's) mission as a public university. Community Engagement has been formally incorporated in our mission statement as one of four elements of institutional distinctiveness. Our commitment to community engagement has resulted in our successful application to be classified as a Community Engagement Institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and in our being distinguished for the past two years on the national President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

Our commitment to Community Engagement has been supported by an infrastructure that includes an Office of Community Engagement and a standing Faculty Senate Community Engagement Committee, as well as our Institute for Technology and Business Development and our Community Central office in downtown New Britain. Our community-based efforts are also supported by our Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, our Professional Development School at the Naylor School in Hartford, and extensive partnerships between our faculty and community organizations.

Addressing such urban challenges as educational attainment, literacy, employment, health, poverty and homelessness, and crime has been integral to our university's efforts to help improve the quality of life in some of our poorest cities.

CCSU's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) has been involved since 2005 in helping the state implement its Justice Reinvestment initiative. It has done so through broad based policy activities – such as staffing the CT Sentencing Commission, The Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System, the Racial Profiling Prohibition Project and the Results First initiative – and by serving as an incubator for cutting edge programs – such as its Children of Incarcerated Parents, Drug Policy and CT Reentry Roundtable Collaborative initiatives, as well as its student-run online newsletter, *Release*, which seeks to educate the larger Connecticut community on what it can do to stem recidivism.

CCSU's Institute for Technology and Business Development (ITBD) has responded to our state's urban challenges through career exploration and skill development programs that support workforce development. ITBD's Summer Youth Employment Programs engage city youth in career exploration in STEM-related topics and in manufacturing, healthcare, banking/finance, and education. ITBD's Neighborhood Assistance Act Program provided advanced manufacturing skill training for students from New Britain High School, EC Goodwin Tech, and the Hartford Job Corps. In partnership with the Travelers, ITBD recently organized a Youth program in Insurance and Financial Services for middle-school students and a Young Engineers program for middle- and high-school students at the New Britain Boy's and Girl's Club.

Two years ago, CCSU established Community Central as a storefront presence in New Britain in partnership with New Britain High School. The mission of Community Central is to contribute to the educational, social, and economic growth of New Britain and surrounding communities. Staffed by a Vista volunteer, students, and faculty mentors, Community Central has been actively engaged in tutoring programs in the schools, after-school mentoring programs for high school students, reading and literacy programs in partnership with the YMCA, food drives, fundraisers to promote sustainability and recycling, and initiatives to help alleviate homelessness. Community Central has also assumed a leadership role in promoting the arts and enrichment in New Britain by hosting art shows in its gallery, participating in city-wide art festivals, and coordinating a community mosaic project that engaged hundreds of artists, students, and citizens. For its contributions to promoting the arts in New Britain, Community Central received an award last year from the Greater New Britain Arts Alliance.

After 13 years as partners, the Naylor School in Hartford and CCSU established the Naylor-CCSU Leadership Academy (NCLA) in 2011. At NCLA, teacher candidates from all levels of CCSU's certification programs are involved in virtually all classrooms at NCLA. A CCSU Teacher Education faculty member is on site at least one day per week, participating in planning, governance, professional development and all aspects of school/community life. With supervision, CCSU graduate students in Marriage and Family Therapy offer year-round support services to children and families within the school setting. University classes meet on site, and CCSU students and faculty from the wider university community participate in joint projects, service, outreach, and events. NCLA is a powerful, real-world example of sustained collaboration, reciprocal learning, community service, and engaged scholarship in action – all to promote the education of healthy, civic-minded students.

The university's commitment to community engagement has been widely reflected in academic courses that integrate community-based projects. Students in our nursing program partnered with the New Britain's Friendship Center to provide free health screening for the center's homeless clients. Students in a sociology course helped a community service organization evaluate the impact of small grants to citizens threatened with homelessness. Students in an advanced history

course presented recommendations for converting old buildings into affordable housing for the homeless.

As these examples indicate, CCSU has been actively engaged in supporting efforts to end homelessness in New Britain. With representation on the Executive Committee of the Mayor's Workplan to End Homelessness, CCSU has organized several Homeless Connect events, which provide free toiletries, clothing, and services for homeless citizens and introduce them to housing and employment agencies. For spring 2013, CCSU is planning a gala event at the New Britain Museum of Modern Art in partnership with the city to raise funds and community awareness about the problem of homelessness.

Promoting educational attainment for low-income and under-represented minority students and mentoring them to finish high school and enroll in college has also been a long-standing focus of our community engagement efforts. Over 2,200 students have participated in CCSU's ConnCAP program for students in grades 7-12, which has an average program retention rate of 90% and a college-going rate well above the national average. Our Ninth Grade Academy introduces 600 New Britain high school freshmen to college each year through a series of campus visits and programs. CCSU was just awarded a \$1.25 million "Talent Search" grant from the Department of Education to help 500 low-income students in grades 6 through 12 prepare to enroll successfully in higher education. For the past three years, our summer Bridges program has helped high school graduates throughout the state achieve college readiness in math, writing, and reading. CCSU has recently been designated as a partner in the Travelers' EDGE program, which identifies, mentors, and supports low-income students through their completion of a college degree.

Our plans for the future of our university over the next decade envision an expanded physical presence in New Britain and the establishment of a university center in Hartford. These expansions will not only provide additional opportunities for us to deliver education in urban settings but also increase opportunities for our students and faculty to partner with members of the community on efforts to improve the quality of life in the cities and to promote economic vitality.

I would personally like to thank the committee for your interest in this important topic and for the opportunity this has given me to familiarize you with some of CCSU's efforts to address challenges facing Connecticut's poorest cities. Although my remarks have touched on only a small number of specific initiatives, I hope I have conveyed that the scope of our involvement in state urban issues engages faculty, students, and staff throughout the university.