



**Education Committee**

**March 4, 2013**

**Public Hearing**

**Testimony**

**By**

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**University of Connecticut**

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on Proposed Bill 1000, *An Act Concerning the Establishment of An Academically Gifted Advancement Program*. My name is Jennifer Lease Butts, I am the Assistant Vice Provost for Enrichment Programs and Director of the Honors Program. I am pleased to provide comments on this important bill.

- Other colleges outside of Connecticut may not consider the certificate as outlined in this bill as the equivalent of a high school degree, whether due to lack of familiarity with the program and our state's regulations or due to strict requirements for a degree from an accredited high school or the equivalent of a high school degree (such as a GED or Home Schooling Certificates). This might negatively impact a student's ability to enroll in another college or university outside of the state of Connecticut, receive scholarships, or matriculate as either an entering freshman or a transfer student, thereby unintentionally limiting the educational opportunities of academically gifted students.
- It is unclear from the current draft of this legislation about what is intended in terms of the student's enrollment at a Connecticut college or university. Will students simply be enrolled in courses? Will they be allowed to fully matriculate and live on campus in residence halls? Will they be eligible and considered as an entering freshman should they apply for admission at another institution in Connecticut, or would they be considered a transfer student?

- If students are effectively “day students” and taking courses on a college campus, this does not drastically change current practices at some institutions in the state which already allow students to take college courses while in high school.
- If students are allowed to fully enroll in the college or university and become residential students, this dramatically impacts housing and residential life. Facilities, staffing patterns, policies, and procedures on campus would need to be altered to ensure the safety and positive development of students on campus who are legally minors.
- Most colleges and universities offer the best scholarship packages to incoming freshmen. If students participating in this program are viewed as transfer students by other universities (either in-state or out-of-state), their financial costs for attending college may dramatically increase due to decreased financial support from institutions.
- Connecticut currently has one of the latest cut-off dates for kindergarten enrollment in the country. As such, we regularly enroll students who have completed grade 12 and begin college at the age of 17. This bill could realistically move the age of enrollment for students to 16 years, or even younger if students have already been accelerated in K-12 gifted programs. The developmental needs of a 15 year old, even an academically gifted one, are very different than the developmental needs of a 21 or 22 year old college student. This presents challenges for the staff and faculty of a college or university, including but not limited to the enforcement of state and federal laws meant to protect minors which may be much more difficult to monitor or regulate on a residential college campus.

Additional items for consideration:

- UConn’s Office of Early College Programs currently offers college courses through their nationally accredited program, UConn Early College Experience, in 160 Connecticut high schools to 10,000 juniors and seniors. These courses are taught by UConn-certified high school instructors in the high schools. While students with a wide range of abilities typically have the opportunity to take one or two courses, academically talented students frequently graduate from high school with a full year of college credits. This opportunity enriches their high school experience and recognizes their ability to perform at a college level. Since program fees are very low, these credits are essentially tuition free.
- UConn’s Office of Early College Programs has been collaborating for several years with Connecticut Community Colleges, and less extensively with CSUs, to create a more seamless standards-based opportunity throughout the State’s public higher education system for high school students to take a variety of credit-bearing college courses at their high schools.
- There are a number of models of early entrance programs to college that could provide insight into the successes and challenges of bringing students to campus early. A partial list includes the following programs:

- The Advanced Academy of Georgia, University of West Georgia
- Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, Massachusetts
- Bard High School Early College, Bard College
- California State University, Los Angeles, Early Entry Program
- The Clarkson School, Potsdam, NY
- The Program for the Exceptionally Gifted (PEG), Mary Baldwin College
- Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- The Missouri Academy of Science, Mathematics, and Computing, Northwest Missouri State University
- Residential Honors Program (RHP), University of Southern California
- Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science (TAMS), University of North Texas
- University of Washington Early Entrance Program (EEP)