

Jynnelle Smith  
Southern Connecticut State University  
Testimony Public Hearing 2/24

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Jynnelle Smith. I began my collegiate journey at Pace University in New York City. After spending two years at Pace, I came back to my roots in New Haven and enrolled at Southern Connecticut State University. Currently, I am junior, majoring in Business Administration with a concentration in Management.

Transferring to SCSU was not something I initially wanted to do, but it has proven to be a positive, life-changing decision. Southern has offered me tremendous opportunities to advance myself not only academically – becoming a Dean’s List student, and securing an internship with the second-largest commuter railroad in the nation – but socially – as president of the Debate Team, and most notably serving as a Board Chair for Student Government.

The opportunities that are available to all students at Southern and its sister institutions come at significantly lower costs than that of a private institution. Lower cost equates to lower student indebtedness, which I especially understand is paramount not only for myself, as a student with previous student debt exceeding \$60,000 dollars, but my peers as well, who hope to avoid a similar situation.

Rising tuition, living costs, and textbook costs, are all causes for great concern. All possible funding options that are available for Connecticut’s higher education system should be explored. The students that comprise the CSU system will serve as the backbone of the workforce and the tax base of the state many years after graduation. They deserve to have the state invest in them, just as much as they will eventually invest in the state. Connecticut must look to not only provide an accessible education, but a quality education.

When I earn my degree from Southern, I will continue my dream of expanding the small business I set up with father, into a statewide franchise. By investing in my education, I will be able to achieve my goals and in return, provide job opportunities in the state.

Affordability, accessibility, and exceptional quality need to be the norms within Connecticut’s higher education system, and not the exceptions. I ask that you continue to support higher education and look for new ways to increase that support, so students like myself will be able to pursue their dreams and gain access to the truly transformative opportunities and experiences that are attainable with a college degree.