

February 24, 2014

To: Sen. Beth Bye, Chair

Rep. Toni Walker, Chair

Members of the Appropriations Committee

The members of the Community College Roundtable recommend revision of Public Act 12-40, An Act Concerning College Readiness And Completion.

The CCRT, membership listed below, applauds the expansion of innovative academic strategies initiated at the state's community colleges which began as early as 2005 through participation in the national Achieving the Dream initiative funded by grants from the Lumina and Gates Foundation to support the colleges' development, testing, and replication of strategies to enhance student success in developmental education. The committee strongly recommends additional State funding be directed to further explore and expand the strategies that have proven effective in improving student retention and success in college-level programs with the ultimate goal of improving graduation rates.

However, long experience in delivering and assessing developmental education at the community colleges has led to the conclusion that every student's educational experience is different, every student learns differently and every student deserves the chance to succeed in college. No single strategy or set of interventions suits every student. Testing of Achieving the Dream strategies reveals this beyond question and new strategies are constantly in development in the search for a solution to the problem of preparing all students, including those who are disadvantaged or at risk of failing to succeed. In an economy that requires higher education and 21st century skills to qualify for employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency, every student is entitled to the education and support that will help them to succeed, to graduate, to find employment and a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

Therefore the committee requests that consideration be given to eliminating the limitations contained in PA 12-40 that would shut students out of the opportunity for developmental education by restricting the timeframe for enrollment in programs and limit the delivery of services that are critical to support student success. These restrictions threaten to create a class of students who will be prevented from succeeding because their access to successful strategies and continued enrollment will be limited by an arbitrary time schedule that does not meet their needs. As research continues on this important issue, the committee fears that in a state with the greatest achievement gap in the country, long term results will prove to have most negatively impacted Connecticut's most vulnerable students, many of whom will be minority students, at-risk and disadvantaged students.

Meeting students at their level of need has been a guiding principle since the first colleges in the community were chartered by the Truman Commission following World War II. Setting limits on opportunities or choosing which students may succeed threatens not only the mission but the students they serve.

In a NY Times article of February 21, David Brooks quoted Joel Kotkin in saying "the middle class is being proletarianized, and the uneducated class is being left behind." Please don't leave the citizens of Connecticut to be uneducated and "left behind."

Respectfully,

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