

Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Faraclas. I am a professor of public health in my 39th year of service at Southern Connecticut State University, and President of the SCSU Faculty Senate. I am here to speak about Transform CSCU 2020.

In March, 2013, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that cuts in state appropriations for higher education “make it harder to afford a college education,” and “failure to invest in higher education undermines states’ economic potential.”¹ The report concluded that “states have scaled back the very investments that will help build that sort of workforce” necessary to develop and maintain a strong middle class. Now we have Governor’s Bill 5050, *An Act Improving College Completions*, designed to create access and populate our State Universities.

The Governor’s “Go back to get ahead” proposal is an innovative way to create opportunity for students by making returning to school more affordable. However, students who were not able to complete their programs likely have special needs that require intensive faculty and support-staff attention, funding for which is not included in proposed legislation, and should be a high priority of this committee—and not just for the “Go Back” population: Consistent with national trends, *many* of today’s students are not prepared for college. It is our responsibility to ensure that they are taught in reasonably small classes with instructional continuity provided by full-time professors. At Southern and our sister Universities, the full-time faculty has close, personalized contact with students, which is the most effective way of working with those who are not well prepared for college. Research shows that relying on other than full-time, tenure-track professors threatens student success and “reduces the likelihood that students will graduate from college.”² Yet, we are over-reliant on part-time faculty and are under pressure to raise class sizes. This works against our goals of retention and timely graduation, and contradicts the purpose of inviting back students who previously had been unable to stay in college.

With regard to Governor’s Bill 30, *An Act Concerning the Board of Regents for Higher Education Infrastructure*, which will improve system infrastructure, and hopefully begin a new era of investment in the CSCU system we are encouraged to know that \$60 million of technological improvements will be made in our classrooms. The proposed plan is to direct another \$60 million to a centralized “President’s Operating Fund,” which will channel funds to individual institutions. With their intrinsically separate missions, the state universities, community colleges and Charter Oak State College need distinct budget lines that allow them to remain flexible enough to meet evolving academic challenges and best serve their students and society. Separate missions mean separate identities. Within a collaborative system, those separate identities need to be protected and nurtured to ensure the missions can be realized.

Education transforms lives. A University degree is a passport to opportunity. As you take up HB 5050 and SB 30, please consider the need for even broader support of our state universities to better serve the sons and daughters of Connecticut, particularly focused on bringing more full-time faculty into the classroom and helping us keep our class sizes tailored to the very real needs of our students. Thank you.

¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (March 19, 2013). States made deep cuts to higher education. Retrieved 2-22-14 from <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3928>.

² Ehrenberg, Ronald G. and Zhang, Liang. (August 2004). Do tenured and tenure-track faculty matter? National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved 2-22-14 from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w10695.pdf>.