

Testimony before the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

RE: S.B. 402 AN ACT CONCERNING FACULTY REPRESENTATION ON THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Submitted by Stephen Adair, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Central Connecticut State University, Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) to the Board of Regents for Higher Education, and ex-officio member of the Board of Regents

March 11, 2014

Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, and Members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee thank you for this opportunity to testify

I am here to urge your support for SB 402, An Act Concerning Faculty Representation on the Board of Regents, which would make the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee non-voting members of the Board of Regents.

I will begin by thanking this committee for the forethought in creating a Faculty Advisory Committee in the initial legislation that created the Board of Regents, as well as the passage last year of a bill that allowed the Chair of the FAC to serve as an ex-officio member of the Board.

Over the last couple of years, the FAC has been active and assisted in several important policies initiated by the Board. We made significant revisions to the Board's Transfer and Articulation policy (TAP) two years ago, which will improve the transfer of credits for students across the institutions in the system. We successfully lobbied the Board to insure a faculty vote on the new, common General Education framework under the TAP policy – a vote which went favorably. We coordinated faculty votes through campus governance bodies regarding the Board's strategic plan efforts that led to a revision of the mission and vision statement for the system. We have worked closely with the system's senior administration as a contributing voice in the initial planning and committee design to meet the requirements of PA 12-40, the developmental education bill passed last year. Just a week ago, through participation in the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, I was able to make several improvements in defining the code for students in a forthcoming student handbook.

As I see it, the Faculty Advisory Committee serves two primary functions. It provides a window for the BOR into the more than 5000 faculty members across the 17 institutions, and it brings a faculty voice to the Board on matters of systemic importance. Having faculty representation on the Board can only enhance its decision-making capacity, improve its legitimacy, and make our system of shared governance more responsive to the interests of all. As a faculty member at CCSU, however, I need to be informed and educated regarding the mission and conditions operating within the community colleges, and thus may not always serve as the most knowledgeable advocate for the community colleges. I believe the BOR would be better served with both the Chair and the Vice Chair serving on the board.

In SB 402, I recommend removing the reference to two year terms on the Board. The original legislation creating the FAC required the committee to rotate terms of office. By simply stipulating that the Chair and Vice Chair serve as ex-officio members of the BOR, you do not need to specify in SB 402 the length of service. Circumstances may arise in the FAC such that the committee may need to make changes in the leadership position. The current language in SB 402 may prevent us from making needed adjustment.

In passing SB 402, I believe this committee will be furthering its own intent behind the initial creation of the Faculty Advisory Committee, while improving the decision-making capacity of the Board of Regents.

I thank you for the initial opportunity to serve on the FAC, for raising this bill, and for hearing my testimony.