Rhea Drozdenko
Northwestern Connecticut Community College
Resident of Torrington, CT

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

After two years of volunteering and traveling on the West Coast, I decided to move back to my hometown and attend Northwestern Connecticut Community College in Winsted for several reasons. The largest reasons were affordability, accessibility, and I believed that attending would help me to figure out my future plans.

Northwestern far exceeded those expectations. The faculty and staff have always been an integral part of my college experience, and are always there to support me, whether it be through academic, professional or life advising. The countless extracurricular activities, of which I am involved, have offered me opportunities and experiences that I never imagined would happen. I know that I have gotten an excellent education that has always been challenging and interesting to me.

I will be graduating in May, and I know that the college has done an amazing job to prepare me for the next step. I am in the process of applying to both Trinity College and Wesleyan University, and I feel confident about both.

What makes community college special to me, is that it truly is a community. I know that we are not just a feeder school or a student's last resort. Because I do belong to a community, not just a school, I feel the urge to give something back, to make sure that others can have a great education.

I know what it is like to go to school full-time, be in several clubs, and work 30 hours a week. Just like many of my peers, I had to learn how to juggle my priorities. It is my understanding that the members of the Appropriations Committee are, for lack of a better term, professional jugglers. I trust that you can find the best possible solution to our current situation. Because of budget cuts, Northwestern has had to suffer tuition increases, cuts to part-time employees and advisors, and elimination of programs. Because we cannot afford to cut anything more, it is important to me that community colleges will be adequately funded. I want to know that tuition will continue to be affordable, that our incredible faculty and staff will stay with us, and that our basic operating expenses are covered. Those are my basic needs as a student, which I share with thousands of others in this state.

I hope that sharing my experience and observations could help you as you move forward and make decisions about the budget of higher education. I know that not only are community colleges a vital asset to the people of Connecticut, but the graduates will go on to be indispensable citizens of this state.

Thank you for your time.