

Appropriations Committee: State Budget Testimony

Chairwomen Bye and Walker, Ranking Members Kane and Ziobron,
and distinguished members of the committee:

I'm John Board, Western's Student Advisory Committee

Representative, where I have the distinct honor of representing 6,000
students. Thank you for holding this appropriations hearing on the
Board of Regents portion of the budget.

The state of higher education is once again at a crossroads. Four years
ago, the governor stood before you, the general assembly, and the
citizens of Connecticut, informing us that we must keep the promise of
Connecticut's future alive by continually investing in students.

[“Our consolidated system – under the Board of Regents for Higher Education – is more responsive to how today's students learn...Connecticut's four state universities and its community colleges are an integral part of our economic development strategy – the opportunity we offer young students, and the potential for our economy to grow and prosper. They are the promise of Connecticut's future. Let's invest in them.” (Feb. 2013)]

Yet four years later, he has turned his back on the system he helped build. Just a few weeks ago, it was brought to light that over the last five years, tuition at the CSUs (Connecticut State Universities) has increased over twenty-one percent; while state support has decreased by thirteen percent. Thus placing a significant burden on students, while faculty and staff have had certain favorable protections. (“no-lay off protections”). – Let’s not renew the “no layoff” provision at the end of this fiscal year. The governor told us there had to be “shared sacrifice” and joint responsibility among all parties. Students are experiencing annual tuition hikes rising faster than inflation – we’ve been doing our part.

In preparation for today’s hearing, I was reading over the SEBAC 2011 Addendum, and noticed on Page 3, sections 2b and 2j – relating to the HEP (Health Enhancement Program) - that it is unclear as to whether or not the state has prepared for the tax on it’s “Cadillac health plans”, which take effect in 2018 (\$10,200 for individuals or \$27,500 for a family). We fear that to pay for these fees, the state will make more cuts by balancing its budget on the backs of our students, faculty, and

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staff. We have also looked into other cost saving measures ahead of the renegotiations next year, and firmly believe that students should play a role in these contract negotiations because it could not only affect the quality of the education which we receive, but it is our tax dollars that are being used to negotiate these deals.

Over the past month, the CSUs have met and decided that allowing each individual campus to prioritize the parts of Transform2020 that be implemented would be the wisest approach, as those on the local level are the one's who know best. As representing Western it is my duty to present the top five initiatives that students want funded; academic advising, first year experience, investment in co-curricular student experience & residence life, revenue management and information technology.

It is our collective responsibility to take a balanced approach in how we restore these proposed cuts totaling thirty-eight million dollars. We have to find ways to maximize grants and any potential federal funds that are available.

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Once again, I want to thank the committee for holding this hearing and listening to the students on the critical issues that are facing us. I stand open to any questions, which the committee may have.

Thank you.

Work Cited:

1. CT Mirror Article: <http://ctmirror.org/2015/02/19/budget-cuts-will-likely-bring-staff-reductions-higher-tuition-to-connecticut-colleges/>
2. SEBAC 2011 Addendum: <http://www.uconnaaup.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2014/07/SEBAC-11-REVISED-TA.pdf>
3. Cadillac Tax: <http://kaiserhealthnews.org/news/cadillac-tax-explainer-update/>
4. Governor Malloy Speech (Feb. 2013): <http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/cwp/view.asp?A=11&Q=518468>

CSCU Transform 2020	
Western's Point of View	
	<u>Top 5:</u>
1	1. Academic Advising
2	2. First Year Experience
3	3. Invest in co-curricular student experience & res life
4	4. Revenue Management
5	5. ITI systems assessment/IT organizational structure
	<u>The Best of the Rest:</u>
6	Enhanced career services
7	collaboration with business community
8	System-wide policy transparency
9	Organizational effectiveness & efficiency
10	Facilities master plan
No Particular Order	Cross Campus registration and admission
No Particular Order	Veteran's Recruitment
No Particular Order	Recruit non-resident students
No Particular Order	Improve opportunities for study abroad
No Particular Order	Graduate Student Recruitment
No Particular Order	K-12 alignment 12-40
No Particular Order	Build state of the art classroom
No Particular Order	Evening and after hours support
No Particular Order	Code compliance/infrastructure improvement