

Statement by Dr. Lawrence J. DeNardis
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
January 20, 2015

Committee Members:

I am pleased to appear before you pursuant to my re-appointment to the Board of Regents for Connecticut Higher Education, State Colleges and Universities.

The CT BOR, in our 3+ years of existence, has striven to be an effective governing board for the newly consolidated seventeen 4 year and 2 year institutions in our system. As you decreed, we have been given essential and important responsibilities, functions and obligations for the system for which we are ultimately accountable.

Clearly the system and its board must serve the state, its citizens, and its students while giving each institution as much autonomy as possible. This often is a delicate matter since having the power and being judicious in its use is the key to effective board governance. Some people in higher education and the general citizenry believe the system should exert more control and create more efficiencies where possible, and others would have us behave more like a coordinating board regularly receiving and evaluating reports and policies from the constituent entities, with a view toward assessing institutional progress and conformance to broad system standards.

Among the members of the General Assembly, you who have authorized us, I expect there are a range of views and opinions about how we should exercise our authority. So it is always good to have opportunities, be it around system budgets, policies or the confirmation of Regents to exchange views on good and effective system board governance.

Let me note before we go further, that I am painfully aware of the difficulties we have had during our initial years of existence beginning with the selection of our first president. The Governor and our system governing board should take care to hire the right person as the system head-it is the most important task we have. Why we totally deferred to the Governor at the outset, I do not know. It proved to be a disaster at the very time we were seeking to establish ourselves and our credibility. The selection process the second time around was considerably better with ample input from a variety of informed sources. And though we have had some additional problems, we, the board, are growing together, coalescing if you will, to meet our responsibilities in a professional manner. There will always be differences among us when it comes to public policies and actions, but we will resolve those differences with rational debate and respectful conclusion as we grow in mutual trust.