

Testimony before the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

**RE: HB 6812 AN ACT CONCERNING FACULTY REPRESENTATION ON THE COMMITTEES and
SUBCOMMITTEES of the BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Submitted by Stephen Adair, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Central Connecticut State University,
Vice-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 12, 2015

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

I am Stephen Adair, Professor of Sociology at CCSU, Vice-Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee and ex-officio member of the Board or Regents.

I urge your support for HB 6812, An Act Concerning Faculty Representation on the Committees and Subcommittees of the Board of Regents, which would strengthen faculty representation on the subcommittees of the Board, while broadening and deepening the understanding of the Board on matters of teaching, learning and the life of the campuses.

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 and the Vice-Chair of the FAC to serve as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Board.

Over the last couple of years, the FAC has been active and assisted in several important policies and initiatives. We made significant revisions to the Board's Transfer and Articulation policy (TAP) and have been instrumental in establishing processes for faculty from across the system to come together to create curricula that will establish transparent pathways between the community colleges and the state universities. We contributed to the defining of the mission and vision statement for the system and the mission statements for the community colleges, the state universities, and Charter Oak. We worked closely with the system's senior administration on the initial planning and committee design to meet the requirements of PA 12-40, the developmental education bill, and continue to monitor the progress of the bill through the system. And over the last year, the FAC has worked to try to represent faculty in defining the elements of a strategic plan under Transform 2020. We will continue to insist that academic quality be maintained and strengthened to insure that excellent, affordable and accessible opportunities are available for students.

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. The BOR faces the formidable task of serving as the central policy body with all of its attendant fiduciary responsibility for 17 public higher education

institutions. The operation of the BOR is organizationally distanced from student life and the vibrancy of our campuses. Unlike other higher educational boards that are connected directly with institutional leadership on a single campus, the BOR's position is further mediated by a system office, which also has no direct relation to students and the day-to-day work life on the campuses.

Having faculty representation on the Board is essential to maintain connection between the governing body and the academic mission. Faculty service on the subcommittees of 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 currently written, HB 6812 removes the provision that excludes faculty from executive session. Faculty recognize that the Board may need to make personnel decisions and engage in discussions concerning collective bargaining agreements from which we need to be excluded. I would like simply to recommend that the current exclusion from executive session be maintained with the added provision that the chair and the vice-chair of the FAC may be specifically invited to an executive session by the chairperson of the board.

Last summer, for example, the BOR had a full day retreat, which included a self-assessment and open discussion concerning the strategic planning process. I believe the Board, the planning process and the relationship between the system administration and the faculty would have been strengthened if we had been invited to participate.

I also support the recommendation made by Vijay Nair, the President of AAUP, to enable the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the FAC to appoint FAC members to serve on each subcommittee of the Board. This will insure that faculty representatives from the state universities, the community colleges and Charter Oak State College have an opportunity to be heard on matters of systemic importance.

In passing HB 6812, 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 opportunity to serve on the FAC, for raising this bill, and for hearing my testimony.