

Greetings Committee Members

The purpose of my message is to ask for higher education in CT to be funded more thoughtfully. In my case, I am legally disabled but able to return to the workforce after the appropriate training. My experience at Manchester Community College is enriching and rewarding.

I have no access to Financial Aid; therefore I need to apply for scholarships every semester. The Manchester Community College Foundation and Hartford Foundation for Public Giving are the sole supporters of my education. As generous as they are, it is not enough to fund me as a full time student.

I work on campus from time to time, but since I am not a Financial Aid Student, I have to investigate every department and try to find a department that has discretionary funds. I am usually able to work for several weeks before budget cuts make it necessary to lay me off. At times, I have been able to earn as much as \$300 in a month. It seems unreasonable to be balancing the state budget on my meager existence.

This semester's scholarship award is representative of the further damage that the state's economy is doing to my education. I was awarded \$1,500 that I am very humbled by and thankful for. That would put three classes within my reach. However, for two classes my book bill exceeds \$500. With no job, I cannot pay that. I go to our administration and request that the scholarship pay for two classes and the remainder would go to the bookstore.

As President of the Student Government Association, I need to express that increasing tuition and cutting the community college budget is having a negative impact on students. Offices are understaffed, negative employee morale is noticeable to the students, and increasing tuition while also cutting our services looks corrupt from the student point of view.

We have sacrificed our entire athletics department. The students are paying more and getting less. A vibrant future in the State of Connecticut depends on more students having access to higher education, not less students.

Please consider funding higher education very differently. Our individual and collective futures depend on it.

Sincerely

Gordon Plouffe
President, Student Government Association
Manchester Community College