



Testimony by Mary A. Papazian, Ph.D.
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Before the Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
March 12, 2015

Good morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

For the record I am Dr. Mary A. Papazian, President of Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) in New Haven. Accompanying me is Dr. Merle Harris, the Chairwoman of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. I am very pleased on behalf of Southern and our sister Connecticut State Universities (CSUs) to have the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 898, *An Act Concerning Professional Doctoral Degree Programs*.

As you are aware, state law currently allows Southern and its three sister institutions (Central, Eastern, and Western) to offer “education doctoral degree programs, including an education doctoral degree program in nursing education” in addition to its offerings at the baccalaureate and master’s levels. Up until recent years, this authority has served us and our communities well.

However, given recent and ongoing changes in the educational requirements for employment in other professions, and most especially in the health and human services fields, this limited authorization is no longer sufficient for our universities to continue to meet Connecticut’s employment needs in these critical areas.

Indeed, in recent years, requirements and expectations have changed for both accreditation and employment. As a result, the usefulness of offering certain master’s degrees has decreased, in some cases forcing institutions to discontinue a program offering in which they have developed specialties, devoted resources, and filled an important role in ensuring a strong pipeline in development of a diverse workforce.

As a consequence, employers face the prospect of fewer qualified job applicants if our universities do not adequately adjust to these new requirements. Also, prospective students would have fewer - and predominately private institution - options for earning an appropriate clinical doctoral degree within their chosen field of study.

At Southern we currently offer both doctoral programs in educational leadership and nursing education.

This occurred because the legislature recognized the need to authorize the Connecticut State Universities to offer more advanced degrees in response to ongoing changes in workforce needs and the need for more advanced clinical preparation in select fields.

In order to continue fulfilling their long-standing role in educating advanced-level practitioners and thereby serving the needs of the community and ensuring access to

these professions by a diverse student population, the CSUs will need to offer select professional doctorates in other professional and scientific fields with similarly identified needs.

Professional doctorates differ in form and purpose from a traditional research PhD. Research doctorates, or PhDs, focus on developing new knowledge in a field of study and are primarily the purview of research universities. The professional doctorate degrees do not emphasize research. Rather, they emphasize skills, practical knowledge and application of research to practical clinical experience. I should point out that we have discussed the proposed statute change with representatives from the University of Connecticut, which offers predominantly research-based doctorates, and they have expressed their support.

The trend toward advanced clinical doctoral preparation in applied fields is already evident in the workplace where, recognizing the increased educational and clinical preparation needed as the professions become more complex and access to healthcare expands, several disciplines already have made the move to the professional doctorate as the entry level credential to the field.

For example, the field of Nursing Anesthesia is moving toward the Doctorate of Nursing Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) as the acceptable entry-level practice degree. In this case, the master's degree will become obsolete. You will hear more about this program when Dean Susan Pease of Central Connecticut State University testifies.

Still others have begun to require advanced clinical training for those currently practicing in the field who wish to advance into more practitioner and clinical administrator roles within organizations. Some such examples include social work, marriage and family therapy, speech and language pathology, and public health.

This reflects the understanding within these professions that the level of knowledge required to be effective at senior clinician, senior scientist, administrator, and management levels is advancing rapidly and requires a degree of specialization that only a doctoral-level advanced clinical education can provide.

I thank you for your consideration of this request. The passage of this legislation would allow Southern and our sister institutions to continue to fulfill our role in promoting Connecticut's economic vitality.

It would give more prospective students, who deserve to have public institution options for their advanced graduate studies, the chance to reach the highest level of professional or clinical accomplishment in their chosen fields.

In addition it would allow our universities to remain viable providers to organizations and businesses in a state where more than 85 percent of our students remain to live and work after graduation.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.