



CONNECTICUT STATE
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Testimony by Dr. William Gammell, Interim Director
for Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning
Board of Regents for Higher Education
Before the Higher Education and Employment
Advancement Committee
March 17, 2015

Senators Bartolomeo and Witkos, Representatives Willis and Betts, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on ***SB 1084 – An Act Concerning Certificate Programs at the Regional Community-Technical Colleges.***

For the record, my name is William Gammell and I am the Interim Director for Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning for the Connecticut State College and University (CSCU) system, comprised of 17 public institutions of higher education in this state.

The CSCU system recognizes and accepts many of the findings of the Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Report conducted over the last several months, which has led to a related bill, SB 973 – An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning Higher Education Certificate Programs. This bill recently passed out of PRI as a substitute, and will be in front of this committee shortly. We believe it is important that, to the extent possible, program offerings be relatable across institutions, so that students are better able to compare costs and outcomes in selecting a course of study.

SB 1084 and SB 973 both require comprehensive data collection and reporting, and both require standardization to some degree in naming, definition, and even price. These requirements are slightly different in each bill, enough so that performing the requirements in both bills would be duplicative, but the results would be incomparable to one another. Therefore, I encourage the General Assembly to settle on one model of naming and reporting.

As written, the Board of Regents (BOR) has two principal concerns with the proposal before you today. First, it is the authority of the Board of Regents, and not the Office of Higher Education (OHE), to determine similarity of programs, student interest, and the necessity of offering programs. While the Office of Higher Education can perform this task for independent and proprietary institutions, it is the Board that has the depth of knowledge necessary to evaluate its programs, and it is the Board that maintains program approval authority over its 17 institutions. The information that OHE would collect as the basis for making these determinations is superficial and insufficient to make the determinations and recommendations required, and does not provide important context, such as local market demand.

Second, the data collection proposed in this bill will result in a fiscal impact. Centrally, the BOR institutional research office is a staff of three individuals focused primarily on meeting state and federal reporting requirements pertaining to its degree offerings. Requiring extensive reporting regarding certificate programs would necessitate additional staff for an office that is already pressed to meet current demands. On the campus level, and particularly in the non-credit area, the infrastructure (in terms of not only human resources, but knowledge and training in student

information systems) is also insufficient to produce data that requires student tracking. The requirements would require the tracking and reporting of information pertaining to 6,000 credit and non-credit certificate students. These concerns apply not only to this bill, but to SB 973 as well.

I encourage this committee to look at sections 3 and 4 of SB 973 as a more appropriate model for developing more uniform names and definitions, as well as for developing easily digestible information that will enhance student knowledge of program offerings and costs. These sections will lead to more informed student choices, but rely on a working group of deans within the CSCU system to develop uniform standards for the programs it offers, and does not place the BOR in the position of evaluating practices at private occupational schools, as does section 2 of the proposal before you.

I believe there are opportunities where we can improve clarity for students, and CSCU looks forward to working with you as this proposal continues to be discussed.

If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Kyle Thomas, Legislative Program Manager, at 860-723-0017, or at thomask@ct.edu.