

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony - February 9, 2016
Good evening, Chairman Walker, Chairman Bye and Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Jody Barr and I the Local SUOAF-AFSCME President representing about 820 non-teaching Faculty within the BOR university system and Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 public and private employees. While SUOAF members do not teach our students in the classroom, we provide vital services to Connecticut's future. We have members providing services in admissions, financial aid, IT, bursars, registrars, residence life, athletics, marketing, accounting, veterans affairs, health services and many other areas that support our students.

My members urge you to please make sure that the Board of Regents' budget for the Connecticut State University System is properly funded. Our members recognize that these are challenging economic times. Yet, these reductions in current services would seem to make matters worse, rather than better. Layoffs within the BOR at our level will only hurt Connecticut's future. Our Universities are already short staffed and doing more with less.

Those of us who work in the CSU system are proud of its accomplishments. We are particularly proud of the students that we assist every day. The CSCU system provides a college education for many students who otherwise would not be able to afford college. Our students truly are the "sons and daughters" of the working class American families that our original land grant colleges were entrusted with educating. A recent Pew foundation study found that a college education is more valuable than ever, as those with a high school education fare ever worse economically. A 2012 U.S. Treasury study reported that the proportion of college costs funded by state and local governments has fallen since 1987 by about one third. This study found that in 2011 a worker with a bachelor's degree made about two thirds more than a worker with a high school degree. It also stated that the unemployment rate for someone with a bachelor's degree is half that of someone with just a high school degree. U.S. News and World Report reports that "Connecticut ranks 33rd among the nation's 50 states in support for higher education. . . Connecticut received an F in the "aid for students" category, D in "state appropriation average" and "tuition" categories, C- in "Higher Ed as a Priority," and the state's highest grade, C+, in "Burden on Families Average." Connecticut received an F in the "aid for students" category, D in "state appropriation average" and "tuition" categories, C- in "Higher Ed as a Priority," and the state's highest grade, C+, in "Burden on Families Average." This indicates that Connecticut is not overly-investing in higher education.

The strongest indicator of a nation's creation of wealth is still the percentage of its citizens with a bachelor's degree. Please restore the funding for the CSCU system. This funding will continue to pay huge dividends for our country.

In Solidarity,

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