



Testimony of Sean Bradbury
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Before the Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
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Representative Haddad, Senator Bye, Senator Linares, Representative Staneski, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on a number of bills of interest to the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU). For the record, my name is Sean Bradbury, and I am the Director of Government Relations for CSCU.

SB 947 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WAIVER PROCESS FOR MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY TEACHING FACULTY.

While we appreciate the intent of this bill in expediting the hiring of advanced manufacturing faculty, it is unnecessary as CSCU has had this waiver process in place since 2015.

Our Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers (AMTCs) were developed in 2011 in response to employer demand for an increase in a highly trained manufacturing workforce in CT. As enrollment increases at the AMTCs, we found a shortage of teaching faculty in this discipline and other highly trained fields like nursing. In response, CSCU created guidelines in 2015 which eliminated the requirement of the signed waiver to come from the CSCU President. Instead, the waivers became the responsibility of the academic deans at the individual institution level. This resulted in increased responses to filling open positions and flexibility to respond to regional training needs.

The issue still remains that the CSCU system cannot compete on a fiscal level in the recruitment of these faculty members. Persons with substantial industry experience would be compensated well above the salaries offered as faculty at the higher education institutions. We would welcome assistance from the legislature or from industry partners in providing financial or awareness assistance in helping us to hire new AMTC faculty members.

SB 969 AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S HIGHER EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS.

CSCU takes no position on transferring the Office of Higher Education to the State Department of Education. As long as OHE is able to carry out their duties, especially as they pertain to the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship, we do not have an opinion on where they should be housed.

We are very supportive of the changes proposed to the Planning Commission for Higher Education. There are a number of positive changes to the structure of the Planning Commission

which we feel will allow it to be more effective than its predecessor. Chief among this is assigning OHE to staff the commission, which will provide much needed support for the Commission's work. Additionally, we are pleased to see the establishment of two standing committees of the Commission, with one serving as oversight for the state's strategic master plan, and the other building upon the work of the Higher Education Coordinating Council and the Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network (P20-WIN).

The inclusion of language around development of policies to promote transfer and articulation is also something which CSCU supports. We feel that the Planning Commission for Higher Education is the best vehicle to help encourage cooperation across the spectrum of public and private institutions in the state to promote transfer and articulation.

One concern we have is in lines 305-306, which as written, we feel has the unintended consequence of giving the commission oversight over management decisions within the constituent units. We support the inclusion of substitute language in these lines proposed by OPM, which read *"make recommendations to the constituent units on how best to align resources, coordinate services, and reduce duplication of efforts in pursuit of the state's higher education goals."*

SB 971 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROMOTION OF TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS.

While CSCU appreciates the intent of this legislation, we do not feel that this is the most effective way to promote transfer and articulation agreements across the state. Specifically, because portions of general education are frequently specific to programs, the 30 credits of a generic general education core of common courses will prevent students in many programs from graduating on time.

On-time completion for associate and baccalaureate degrees translates into 60 credits and 120 credits respectively and includes major and general education requirements. A generic block of 30 common general education credits for each institution, in many cases, would lead to students having to take extra courses in general education to meet specific major requirements. Building academic programs around these 30 generic core credits would either require a break from 60 and 120 credit normalization (and consequentially prevent students from graduating in two or four years), or would require elimination of many of the program specific course credits. Neither of these options is desirable.

The challenges posed by this are part of the rationale for structuring our existing Transfer and Articulation Pathways (TAP) the way that we have. TAP programs already include 30 credits of general education, but these credits take into account the requirements for each major so that students are assured they are taking the general education courses required for their major. For those of you not familiar with TAP, it is a faculty-led initiative to create major pathways for students to complete their first two years at a community college, and their second two years at a state university, with all of their credits transferring and counting towards their major. TAP will have 22 degree pathways by the Fall of 2017 covering up to 70% of students who transfer

between the community colleges and state universities. These pathways are designed so that students take their major specific courses – including 30 credits of major specific general education requirements – in the order that allows them to complete on time.

We would encourage the committee to let initiatives like TAP (which is ready for its biggest launch in Fall of 2017) to build on their success before starting a new and unproven initiative. However, to that end, we support section 2 of this legislation in the promotion and marketing of these existing programs. We feel that marketing these programs is one of the areas where the legislature can be most helpful in fostering the success of these programs, particularly if there are funds to support those efforts.

HB 7212 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROMOTION OF LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS.

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and Teacher Loan Forgiveness program are both great resources for students to help reduce their student loan debt upon graduation. We support any initiative that would make students more aware of options like these programs to help address their student loan debt, and applaud this committee for putting forth this language.

HB 7234 AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDENTS IN CRISIS.

CSCU supports the intent of this legislation in encouraging institutions to support students in crisis attain their educational goals. Our institutions are all too familiar with these situations in which students may be homeless, food insecure, rejected by their parents, or are struggling to meet their basic human needs. We provide what services we can on our campuses to help students in these situations, including operating food pantries for our students at many of our institutions. These are students who are the most at risk for falling through the cracks, and we need to do everything in our power to support them and their education.

HB 7235 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES TASK FORCE.

CSCU supports this legislation's intent to help promote Open Education Resources (OER) across Connecticut. OER is something which our students are particularly passionate about, and are eager to use as a resource to help bring down their textbook costs. Kevin Corcoran from the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (part of Charter Oak State College) is our resident expert on OER for CSCU and also the Co-Chair of the Open Education Resources Task Force. He will be providing testimony before this committee today and can better speak to the specifics in this bill.