

Testimony of Don Mroz, Ph.D.
President of Post University
Waterbury, Connecticut
Before
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
In support of
Raised Senate Bill 970 AN ACT CONCERNING PROGRAM MODIFICATION AT
INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Thursday, March 9, 2017
Room 1E

Good Morning Co-Chairs; Senator Bye, Senator Linares, Representative Haddad and members of the public health committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you to speak in favor of Senate Bill 970.

My name is Don Mroz, I am the President at Post University. I have been in education for most of my adult life, and in Higher Education as a Professor at the University of Michigan, a visiting Professor at University of North Carolina (Chappel Hill), and various Community Colleges. I have been at Post for the past 8.5 years, where I developed the MBA Program, became Dean of the Malcolm Baldrige School of Business, then Provost, and 3.5 years ago became President of the University.

Post University has been part of the Waterbury Community and Connecticut for 126 years where it started as the Matoon School of Shorthand (that is a blast from the past), and has grown into a very respectful University providing quality education to students both on our main campus (750) an online (8,000).

A bit over 2 years ago we went through our NEASC reaccreditation, and came away with glowing remarks from the Commission. I would like to read several sentences that describe Post University as it is now as noted by the NEASC Commission –

“Post has evolved from an institution that served 550 students in 2005 to one that now provides quality career-oriented undergraduate and graduate degree programs in a variety of modalities to more than 17,000 students. We concur with the visiting team that Post University, through its "entrepreneurial energy" and "collaborative culture," has built the needed structures and systems to become a major provider of online education while continuing to maintain its small, traditional campus-based programs. We are pleased to learn that Post has invested in the resources required to ensure the quality of its online programs "in line with advances in the disciplines and the needs of industry," including adding 24/7 online tutoring services, enhancing its Blackboard learning management system, and creating an Office of Instructional Design. The generous merit scholarship program available to Post's campus-based students is noteworthy, as

is the creation of an honors program that has grown from 20 students in Fall 2011 to 130 in Fall 2013 thereby furthering the institution's goal to raise the academic qualifications of its undergraduate student body. We note with favor that the visiting team found a "positive faculty culture" of scholar-practitioners committed to the achievement of their students and that processes are in place to provide consistency across programs offered in different modalities."

In addition, concerning graduate programs...

"Post University is granted general authority to offer programs at the master's level within the scope of the institution's mission because the University has demonstrated its capacity to offer master's programs at an acceptable level of quality. The six professional graduate programs developed to date by the University provide evidence that the institution has built the capacity to successfully offer master's-level programs and that it has set a standard of student achievement appropriate to the degree awarded. The establishment of a Graduate Studies Committee as part of the institution's governance structure and the use of Program Advisory Boards are particularly noteworthy."

I believe these statements speak to the Academic Quality and rigor of our programs, and the exceptional experience we are trying to provide at Post. We want to continue this effort of quality education, and by being allowed the same treatment as every other College and University in the State we can provide additional degree programs to even more students from across the world. One more NEASC story to share that may be key to your decision on this topic. During our reaccreditation I was on the phone with the President of the NEASC Commission discussing accreditation when she said we finally have Post University figured out as a for-profit. I of course asked what she meant, and she proceeded to say we now classify For-Profits into three categories... 1. The publically traded big online schools, some of them have done some unscrupulous things to give for-profits a bad name – clearly you are not one of those. 2. Next are the small Mom & Pop for-profits like the hair salons, tech schools, welding and training schools, and you do not fall into that category either. 3. It is this third category, kind of in-between the others where you fall in that you are run exactly like a Nonprofit, you inquire into best practices, and you put students first.

This is exactly what we have been trying to say to people. Our tax status may have changed in 2004, but as University's go, we have only improved in every way as our quality offerings to students have expanded, we have enhanced our curriculum which is now outcomes-based. We have put in place a comprehensive assessment process (which was also identified by NEASC as being outstanding), and increased our standards for our faculty.

My plea is to treat us as NEASC sees us, and that is as a traditional University. We are intending to grow our Academic Programs over the next several years, which can provide wonderful growth to not only Post, but Waterbury and Connecticut, and by passing this legislation it can assist us in these endeavors. As it is now, we have an undue time burden to get new programs passed.

I would also like to voice support for Bill 837 “AN ACT CONCERNING APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH GROWTH, HIGH DEMAND JOBS! Thank you for allowing me to speak today.