

Written testimony on "Students First" submitted to the Higher Education subcommittee of the Connecticut State Legislature, Jan 30, 2018 ...Dr. Sadu Nanjundiah, Physics & Engineering Physics Department, Central Connecticut State University

Dear members of the Higher Education Subcommittee

I am unable to come to the hearing in person today because of a class conflict. However, I wish to submit the following for your consideration as a faculty member in the Physics & Engineering Physics department at CCSU in New Britain.

The BOR proposal is flawed and will not provide the savings to the budget of our CSCU system as claimed. As my colleague and President of the CCSU-AAUP, Prof. Louise Williams, has stated in her column in the Hartford Courant of Jan 28 [<http://www.courant.com/opinion/op-ed/hc-op-williams-ct-regents-college-merger-0128-20180126-story.html#share=email~story>], consolidation of community colleges and other institutions as a cost saving measure has not worked elsewhere. Moreover the impact of such a move on both students and faculty will be devastating and only succeed in moving our State down a spiral.

As someone who has been teaching Physics for over 30 years, I can say that the "Students First" as proposed by the BOR will only lead to greater hardship for students in learning this core natural science that is also critical to maintaining and increasing our industrial and research expertise and work force.

Instead we will see our State racing to the bottom, particularly in comparison with our New England neighbors. We can emulate models developed in Rhode Island and New York. Resources are an issue but with fairness and creativeness, they can be identified and made available to enhance higher education where it is needed most, at our most accessible and affordable institutions, viz., the State's community, technical colleges and universities.

There is also the serious matter of accreditation of our programs. And the BOR has given little or no attention to the negative repercussions of the "Students First" proposal. In my department, we have had frozen faculty lines and decreased budgets for essential equipment and supplies. The consequences are larger classroom and laboratory sizes with concerns for both learning and safety issues. The name, "Students First", is catchy and makes one think that it will benefit students. Sadly, the opposite is true.