

Kevin J. Kean, Ph.D.  
Lecturer  
Department of Psychological Science  
Central Connecticut State University

January 30, 2018

Dear Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Ranking Member, Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs, guests, and colleagues:

Thank you for your time and attention today.

I apologize for being unable to testify in person today. My teaching obligations at the time of this hearing preclude my attendance.

As you well know, many Connecticut residents and taxpayers, including members of the General Assembly, have received at least part of their higher education in the Community Colleges and the CSU system. An educated populace is absolutely essential to the future of the State of Connecticut.

The problem is that we are increasingly pricing many of our citizens out of our public higher education system. In response to the ongoing funding issues, the CSCU Board of Regents has proposed its *Students First* plan. I can appreciate the intention behind this plan. However, I would like to voice my opposition to it. Other speakers today will tell you that the consolidation and other “efficiencies” proposed in this plan will very likely not save as much money and resources as its backers expect. I fear that this plan may have some unintended consequences for one of the CSCU constituencies that does not often get mentioned: The part-time faculty.

We have been told that *Students First* is not supposed to affect the employment of CSCU faculty. That may be true for the full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty, but across the system the majority of faculty are not tenure-track. Out of approximately 6700 system instructional faculty, around 4600 (or about 68%) are contingent and part-time. This percent goes up to around 80% part-time faculty at some of the community colleges. We make a fraction of the money our tenure-track colleagues do, and we enjoy few of the benefits most people assume we get. We are at-will employees who can simply not be hired back at the start of any

semester. We don't need to have done anything wrong to lose our jobs. Promised employment protections do not apply to us.

In the likely event that *Students First* does not produce the expected savings, the only way to make up the difference will be to reduce the system payroll. Courses taught by part-time faculty will be lost as a result. Even if part-timers don't lose their jobs entirely, they will lose substantial parts of their incomes. Many will also lose one of the few benefits they receive: Their health insurance. In other words, part-time faculty will be disproportionately affected by *Students First*. It is unclear how CSCU can be sustained by further under-resourcing the great majority of its faculty.

The financial situation in our state is bad, and no one disputes that. But we have been in dire straits before, and even in those conditions we invested in our public colleges and universities. Up until about 1983, full-time tuition and fees and CCSU (not including room and board) were about \$500.00 per semester. We invested in higher education because we saw it as a public good. We understood that keeping higher education affordable and accessible benefitted the State of Connecticut and its people. Is an educated citizenry any less important today?

Just maybe we are thinking about this all wrong. Looking at our public colleges and universities as a cost to be minimized is misguided. We would be better served by considering CSCU funding not as a liability, but an investment in our future. CSCU needs to be made more accessible and affordable. It needs to maintain the quality that the people of Connecticut have the right to expect. It is not clear that the austerity and consolidation promised by *Students First* helps Connecticut get back the system of public higher education it deserves. Is this what we really want?

Again, thank you for your time today.