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Good afternoon Representative Haddad, Senator Linares, Senator Bye and
members of the Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify today. I have lived in Connecticut for nearly twenty years as both a student and a university faculty member, first in New Haven and later in Unionville and now Collinsville. I came for graduate school, left for research and employment and returned in 2003 for a position at CCSU. I joined the CCSU faculty because the university impressed me and I wanted to be closer to family. In the last 15 years, I've taught students, carried out research, provided service to the university, purchased a home and become involved in my community. I wasn't born here, but Connecticut is now my state. In the fall, I was proud to represent CCSU, Connecticut, and the United States as a Fulbright Scholar.

I am here today, first of all, to thank you for holding a hearing about the "Students' First" program and for inviting representatives of NEASC to testify. I

am also here to share with you some of the things that I have learned about the important role of accreditation in public universities and colleges, and the faculty role in it. NEASC is only one of the accrediting agencies to which CCSU faculty and administration must report. We also apply for, and happily receive, accreditation from specific professional accrediting agencies, including, for example NCATE, the National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, AACSB International – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the American Chemical Society, and ABET, the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, among others. We also undergo rigorous outside review by experts in our specific fields. CCSU’s History Department was reviewed very positively in 2016 by Professor Barbara Weinstein, former president of the American Historical Association.

<http://www.ccsu.edu/history/files/ReportonUndergradandMAProgramsHistory.pdf>

So, to be clear, as faculty, we answer to our students, to the administration and our colleagues, to the Board of Regents, to you and to the taxpayers, but also—and very importantly—to the accreditors, not only of NEASC, but also of our specific fields. Many times, I fear that when we come before you, some believe that we are only speaking as union members—but the depth and complexity of the reviews to which we, our programs and our universities and

colleges are subject hopefully make clear that we are also responding as professionals in our respective fields.

Many people wonder what faculty do when we are not teaching. Among the things that we do is help to prepare accreditation reports. Currently CCSU is preparing for a NEASC site visit in the fall of 2018. Fifty-two members of the faculty and administration are involved in preparing a self-study that will serve as the basis for that review. Preparation for the review began in November of 2015 and will only be completed in the fall of 2018, at which point we must begin implementing NEASC's recommendations and thinking about the interim report which will be due in 2023. Faculty involved in this process have been meeting, conducting research on the university, drafting the report, and attending open fora for members of the community. The stakes are high—nothing less than accreditation of the University and its academic programs.

I emphasize this because one of NEASC's standards is "organization and governance," a standard over which the faculty has had no control, yet which is vital to our accreditation. The last full NEASC accreditation was conducted at CCSU before the Board of Regents was established. Indeed, only one of the CSUs has been through accreditation since the BOR was established, and none since the major changes involved in "Students First". Yet "Students First" involves a major reorganization of the administration, not only of the community colleges, but also

of the “back office” functions of the universities. I urge you to explore fully the implications of this major change on accreditation.

Thank you for your time today, and for your interest in speaking with representatives of NEASC, and ask that you take seriously the potential issues involved in the reorganization of the community colleges and universities. You may also wish to consult the more specific programmatic accreditors as you ascertain the correct path for Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Mahony