

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Hearing on January 30, 2018

Dear Committee Members,

The “community” aspect of our various community colleges is at serious risk of becoming invisible as this plan to centralize leadership and administrative services steamrolls ahead.

Students at Quinebaug Valley Community College have close and personal interaction with nearly all levels of college administration as they work their way through the various student services of course selection, financial aid, career guidance, job search, education grant programs, counseling, and just plain heart-to-heart talks with the school leaders who have the decision-making authority to immediately assist a student in need. These one-on-one conversations lead to life-changing help for students, who may be single parents working to improve their lives or out of work adults looking for assurance that the job-focused program they are looking to enroll in will give them a chance for a new career. This type of contact, conversation and input from the college leader will not be available from some distant, disconnected administrative office in central Connecticut. The college leaders in the community know of the specific needs of the community that the college is serving. Experience and history show that the further away from a community, be it a school, church, politician, or business, that decision-makers are located, the less understanding exists for the specific needs of that community.

The “community” part of the colleges are also integral to the business community in that local school leaders connect with local business leaders and develop the partnerships that build courses to help local residents learn skills that are pertinent to local industries.

I can speak personally of the value that QVCC brings to our area, from a few direct experiences.

Currently I sit on the QVCC Foundation Board of Directors, as the Vice President of the Foundation. I have had the privilege of serving on this foundation for over 10 years and have seen first-hand the value it brings to students, businesses and the whole northeast corner of Windham County.

As the Interim President and CEO of Day Kimball Healthcare, the local hospital and healthcare system and the largest employer in our region, I have seen the close partnership between hospital leadership and QVCC leadership in developing specific job-focused training courses that give residents the ability to improve their lives and the hospital the ability to develop new employees.

As a former business leader in Putnam, I was able to send employees to the QVCC series of Leadership Training courses and The New Supervisor program. These courses helped develop employees who had completed high school and were now working long enough to accept more responsibility and leadership but needed additional guidance. The QVCC programs were invaluable to my business as well as many others in our region. Many programs at QVCC were tailored to meet the specific needs of our local

businesses and industries, such as Staples, Frito-Lay, International Paper, Lowes and United Natural Foods and were done in conjunction with the leadership of the college. This close connections and support will be lost with the centralized plan being put forth as a cost saving effort.

I do support the first part of the plan to consolidate purchasing functions to be able to take advantage of the power of the economies of scale that can be achieved and is projected to save millions of dollars. This can be done quickly and with less impact to the “community” aspect of the college.

Please consider and request data that will show exactly how the savings will be achieved by consolidating power in a few individuals, distant and disconnected from the communities that the colleges serve while the support, both financial (such as the tremendous contributions by local industries to the new Manufacturing Center at QVCC) and political, will be reduced or even disappear.

It is difficult to see how a centralized leadership model, with accreditation requirements on a state-wide basis can react in a timely fashion to local needs. This critical aspect of a community college is not well defined in the Student First concept and it is very troubling.

Thank you for taking the time to allow community feedback and reviewing this Student First proposal.

Joseph M. Adiletta
Vice President, QVCC Foundation