

I am Terri Nackid, Bethel resident, director of annual and planned giving for the Norwalk Community College Foundation, and parent of an NCC student. I have concerns about the consolidation of community colleges as proposed by the Board of Regents. While I support efficiencies and benefits that will be realized by centralizing back office functions, such as Financial Aid and Purchasing, I strongly oppose the consolidation that will remove campus autonomy for academic programs and I oppose losing our campus identity.

Norwalk Community College plays an important role in supporting Fairfield County's economic and community development. It is unrealistic to think that administrators in Hartford can understand the unique needs of students, families and businesses in Fairfield County. The consolidation will take away NCC's ability to respond to local needs in a timely way.

Take for example, Norwalk Community College's Veterinary Technology program that launched in 2014 in response to the growing need for credentialed Vet Techs in Fairfield County. This professional field has a strong employment outlook, and is expected to grow 19% in the next 8 years. For the first class of Vet Techs at NCC, 100% had local jobs BEFORE graduation. My child is a student in this exceptional program. I hate to think about what might happen with consolidation. Will NCC's program be forced to merge with Vet Tech programs currently offered at Middlesex Community College and Northwestern CT Community College? Will local clinical field experiences continue? Will my child and other students lose this local opportunity for education that will lead to their future employment in Fairfield County?

I am also concerned that the loss of a distinct degree from Norwalk Community College will be a detriment to my child and other students who must compete for admission and scholarships when they transfer to complete their bachelor's degrees. NCC is recognized for its rigorous academic preparation. NCC's brand helps students transfer to top tier universities such as Columbia, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and NYU. But, the majority transfer to colleges in Connecticut, including the state universities. NCC's programs and community connections encourage young people stay here, which provides the workforce that local companies need. NCC is the largest feeder to UConn-Stamford. My child intends to transfer to Western CT State University to complete a bachelor's in biology. Two-thirds of the NCC Foundation's transfer scholarship recipients complete their bachelor's degrees in Connecticut.

The purpose of a "community" college is to serve those in the school's local "community" – to respond to local educational needs, reflect community interests, and collaborate with local partners. Consolidating 12 community colleges into one state-wide institution will take away each school's unique ability to serve their local population.

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