RJ Dewar Testimony  
Eastern Connecticut State University

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Thursday, March 7th, 2019

Thank you Representative Walker and Senator Osten, ranking members and committee members for giving me the chance to address you today.

I’m honored to have been selected to represent Eastern and speak to you, mostly because this opportunity would seem to be very unlikely to some who knew my background. People are often referred to as a product of their environment. Growing up in New Haven, Connecticut hasn’t been the ideal situation to go through. I am a first-generation college student from a low socio-economic background. I also have an identical twin brother who is also a student at Eastern. My parents are having to struggle to assist us with the significant financial obligations of attending school. As you can imagine the financial responsibilities for my parents haven’t been easy to fulfill, we had to apply for loans and grants and I became a resident assistant to help decrease the cost of attending college.

Given all of that what motivates me to keep going is the desire to help my parents out and to make them proud. I feel like I can accomplish this at Eastern.
As you know, Eastern is Connecticut’s public liberal arts university. It doesn’t matter what major you have, at Eastern you are going to learn a lot about a variety of things. I have taken science, art, and economics classes, which have been challenging and rewarding. I have worked on developing the skills that employers desire from college graduates: how to think critically; how to gather and analyze information and how to solve problems. I aspire to be enter the field of higher education and hopefully give back to college students who come from similar backgrounds like myself.

I have been very fortunate to live on a small campus where you get to have conversations with full time professors—not just adjuncts—and where you can lead class discussions and complete team projects. I’m currently the Vice President of the MALES organization, a member of the Asian Cultural Society and an intern in the Vice President of Student Affairs office. These experiences are giving me an opportunity to work as a member of a team, practice my leadership skills, and contribute on campus as a student leader.

Eastern offers great support services. As a Resident Assistant I have referred my students to our Math Achievement and Advising Center plenty of times. Counseling and Psychological Services has provided mental health
counseling to my residents and peers helping them through the most traumatic
times in their lives. Housing and Residential Life provides an environment that is
safe and allows students to thrive by participating in co-curricular activities.

If you cut Eastern’s budget or do not provide the level of financial support
that is needed, we will not be the same university that I have grown to
appreciate. We have been very fortunate at Eastern to have received the support
provided by the legislature in the past, and it is my hope that you can continue to
support our state universities so that students like me, and my brother can fulfill
our dreams of graduating from college, pursuing our careers and remaining in the
state of Connecticut.

Thank you again for the time to speak today.