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ices Testimony

Hi,

I was not accepted to share my testimony at the University state budget but would like for it to be included in print.

Here is the testimony:

My name is Kimberly Duhart and I am a first generation student from Norwalk, CT. I went to a pretty diverse High School and growing up I learned how to get by without having to always try my hardest. When applying to colleges, I didn't know what to expect, as no one in my family had gone to college before. Everything about college was unknown to me, which made it really scary to start school. I remember when I got accepted to UConn and I saw my acceptance that my acceptance was contingent upon my completion of the Student Support Services pre-collegiate summer program. Since then, Student Support Services (SSS) has been an instrumental part to my success as a student and leader thus far.

Coming into the University was nerve-racking because it was my first time being away from my family and twin sister who I saw every day of my life for 18 years. I was very close to my family and friends and struggled to leave them. While at the SSS summer program, I was able to make amazing friends through the activities they put on and encouraging us to get to know one another. SSS also allowed me to connect to people that looked like me, which was something that was very important because I have never been at a predominantly white institution. SSS gave me a sense of belonging at UConn. The program also prepared me to be a successful student at the university. I was given the opportunity to learn how to study effectively and also was given an amazing support system who I went to in times of need and triumph. I learned how to approach professors for help in office hours, which was something that became crucial for my success. SSS taught me about all of the resources that UConn had to offer, and how to take notes in a big lecture class. Because of SSS, I was able to receive a 4.0 in my first semester and end my undergraduate career with a 3.8 gpa. I remember my sophomore year, after the passing of my grandmother and a very hard semester, it was my SSS counselor who was a huge support to me and encouraged me to keep going. My counselor taught me to advocate for myself so I could receive the help that I needed. SSS was also instrumental in helping me get into the Neag School of Education, which is the best education school in the state and a top 25 school nationwide. Because of this opportunity, I am confident that when I graduate that I will be able to get a job that I love.

SSS has also helped me to make many connections with professionals in the field through the large network of people that are affiliated with the program. SSS made it clear that no matter what I was going through, I could go to them, because I established genuine relationships with the counselors and students who I grew close with during that summer program. SSS even gave me the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time. I travelled to London where I learned so much about myself as an individual and made new connections. I was able to grow and find more of myself through this experience. I never thought I would be able to go to another country because I could not afford it, but SSS championed to get me the funding that I needed to be able to go. SSS made my dream come true.

One of the things I value most about SSS are the relationships that it has brought to my life. I worked for the program for two summers as a community leader for the summer program. Through this experience, I grew immensely as a leader as I learned from my colleagues, peers and the incoming freshmen about how to communicate, collaborate and be a peer mentor. I know that my relationships with my peers, the counselors, and the new students will be lifelong.

Through SSS I have been able to experience things and been given opportunities that I would not have been able to have otherwise, and I will forever be grateful. SSS had impacted me and thousands of other students, and I have yet to talk to a student who has not enjoyed the privilege of being part of such an amazing community. I hope that SSS can continue to support students to succeed like me, but this cannot happen if funding does not continue. Thank you for listening to my story.

Best,

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