

Why All Residents Need to Care About What 5/5 Means to the Future of State Universities

By Mary Collins

5/5.

I need you to focus on that repeating number for a moment, despite all of the numbers we see every day about COVID positivity rates, election results, inches of snow.

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The Board of Regents that oversees the Connecticut State University system wants professors to increase their total teaching load from four to five classes a term, 10 classes in each academic year.

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It will allow them to hire fewer professors, probably convince a lot of talented veteran faculty to retire early, and make it easier to assign classrooms on some campuses where space can be tight.

But my students at Central Connecticut State University have their own cost saving goals; many have transferred to CCSU after running out of money while attending more expensive private universities. Others chose CCSU from the start because they could walk away with little to no debt. They all expect CCSU to offer them college-level classes at one-quarter the price of private colleges and universities.

And we do.

As a former member of the Senate Promotion and Tenure Committee I saw first-hand that, despite the current onerous 4/4 course load, many of our faculty continue to excel in their scholarly or artistic fields, succeed in the classroom, and provide outstanding service on many levels at the university itself. Some, who have such exemplary professional records they could probably secure a tenured position at a better-paying elite private college or university, stay at CCSU because they believe in an affordable education for all.

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But if the BOR has its way with our workload, many of the most accomplished faculty will leave.

If the BOR has its way with our workload, we will struggle to recruit new talent for any faculty position at the university. I've sat on more than a dozen job searches and have had applicants say that they simply can't imagine continuing their creative work while handling a 4/4 course load so they must withdraw their application (or simply don't apply to begin with).

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Under these new conditions that comparable-education-for-less dream that CCSU students hope and expect simply won't happen. My brother, a tenured Professor of History at Georgetown University (tuition more than \$70,000 a year), generally teaches a 2/2 load or even just a 2/1 load if he is working on a book. Under those conditions, there's no doubt students attending that school will receive a college-level education.

If the BOR has its way, we cannot credibly guarantee that anymore for any university in the CSU system saddled with that 5/5 ratio.

All Connecticut citizens, even those that do not send their children to state universities, should care about this problem, because it exacerbates the growing economic and educational divide in our country. The gap has grown so big it's on par with what my mother and father saw during the Great Depression where only a small elite group could afford the best schools.

They were saved by the G.I. Bill, a program that granted them tuition in exchange for their years of service during World War II. That brought my father, an orphaned Irish Catholic out of Hartford, to Harvard. That brought my mother, one of a family of nine living on one salary during the 1930s, out of her small-town New England life to Boston University.

Their story of how an affordable education transformed their lives motivates me at CCSU every day. My brother also does important work at Georgetown University, but we are both **college** professors offering **college** classes.

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Look hard at those numbers and remember: if the BOR wins, faculty in the CSU system may no longer be able to legitimately offer college-level classes anymore.

And we know who loses if that happens.

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