

Testimony before the Appropriations Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget for  
Higher Education Agencies  
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Good afternoon,

My name is Lauren Doninger, I am a professor at Gateway Community College and Faculty Chair of the Faculty/Staff Council

Connecticut can only prosper if everyone has equal opportunity. True equal opportunity will require deep levels of repair of social, economic, and educational structures that are steeped in systemic racism. I hope that as a state and a nation we begin to do that hard work. I fear that it will be a long time before a Black child born in New Haven truly has the same opportunities as a white child born in Greenwich. While we do that long-overdue work, we must create opportunities for all citizens to access higher education. The front door to that opportunity is the community colleges.

I implore you to fund the community colleges as if people's futures depend upon them - because they do. I implore you to fund the community colleges as if the economic recovery of Connecticut depends on them - because it does.

As you think about the millions of dollars allocated to the community colleges I urge you to carefully interrogate where those dollars are being spent. I urge you to question the funding of a monstrous, bloated, centralized bureaucracy with a blank checkbook for high-priced consultants. I hope you wonder about the salaries of a grotesque tier of Presidents, Regional Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, Directors, Managers, Deans, Associate Deans, and Provost all paid to work in buildings without students.

Rather than funding an army of administrators, please secure a stable source of funding for Debt-Free Community College (aka PACT). Please consider how the current model of PACT, which requires full-time enrollment, disadvantages some students. I will tell you about Tanisha as her story is representative of many of our students. When I met with Tanisha for advising she reported concern about her progress in some classes. Tanisha has two young children, works full-time, juggles homeschooling, and unstable child care, all while taking a full course load. Tanisha was taking a full load because it was required for PACT. By trying to access PACT Tanisha was set up to fail. Students who attend full-time have better graduation rates because they have the luxury of attending full-time. I hope that you will work with faculty groups to identify ways for debt-free college to lift all students.

How we are taxed and how we spend those dollars reflect what we value as a people. Connecticut will not prosper until all are valued equally and there is equal opportunity.