



*Testimony by David G. Carter, Chancellor
Connecticut State University System*

*State Economic Strategic Plan
Thursday, January 17, 2008*

Good evening, Commissioner McDonald. For the record, my name is David G. Carter, and I am Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the State's Economic Strategic Plan.

First, let me commend you for undertaking this important endeavor, seeking the input of businesses and people throughout the state as you look ahead to ensure Connecticut's economic well-being. And let me assure you that this is an issue that the Connecticut State University System takes very seriously.

Connecticut is at a crossroads, and what we do – or don't do – in the days ahead will go a long way toward determining what the next 20 years will look like across our state. Education must play a vital part in this comprehensive Strategic Plan if it is to be a true roadmap for the state's future success.

Let me first tell you a little about the Connecticut State University System and the important role it plays in our State. The System is comprised of four institutions – Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State Universities. I'm fond of saying we are four, and we are one. And we are Connecticut's largest university system.

With more than 35,000 students – 93% of whom are Connecticut residents – and with 86% of our graduates remaining in the State after graduation, we provide the "fuel" for the Connecticut economy. In fact, if you'd like to see our state's workforce of tomorrow, take a look in our classrooms today.

Our universities have been referred to as "universities of opportunities" because they continue to provide access to many young men and women who are the first in their families to attend college, to students of color, and to transfer students from our community colleges and other Connecticut institutions of higher education. In addition, more than one-third of our transfer students come back to Connecticut after beginning their post-secondary education at institutions out-of-state.

Our enrollment continues to grow – reaching the highest levels in history. Our graduates live throughout the State – in every city and town, and as a group, are a dynamic and potent force for Connecticut's future.

You may not know that the number of full-time students attending CSUS universities has increased by 37% since 1996. Or that first-time freshman applications increased by over 10% in just the past year. You may not know that the number of transfer students from Connecticut community colleges increased by 31% in the past five years, or that 37% of our transfer students come to Central, Eastern, Southern and Western from institutions outside Connecticut.

Much has been said and much has been written about the brain drain, and the numbers of students that leave our state. Well, our students, in overwhelming numbers, stay here and contribute to Connecticut's future.

If you have been educated in Connecticut's schools, purchased goods from a Connecticut manufacturer, or been in one of the state's hospitals, you have likely met one of our graduates. In so many fields of endeavor, our graduates are community leaders in every corner of our state.

Let me briefly highlight four areas that demonstrate the significance of Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State Universities: Teaching, Nursing, Business, and what's called STEM... Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

- For every 3 teachers in Connecticut's school systems, 2 are from a Connecticut State University System institution.
- As a System, we graduate the largest number of nurses with Bachelor's degrees.
- As many as 20% of our students graduate with a degree in Business.
- And we are proud to now host the Small Business Administration's Small Business Development Centers at all four universities, as we enhance working partnerships with the Department of Economic and Community Development, local Chambers of Commerce, and others to support Connecticut's small businesses and entrepreneurs.

As one of Connecticut's precious gems, the Connecticut State University System awards 25% of all Bachelor's Degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – the high-demand STEM subject areas – and our leadership extends through:

- Computer Information Science & Systems
- Biological Sciences
- Physical Sciences and
- Mathematics & Statistics.

As economists and demographers point out, Connecticut is changing, dramatically, and the opportunity to reverse unsettling trends, such as a projected drop in the number of students with four-year college degrees, is at our doorstep right now.

We need to prepare students not only for today's rapidly changing world, but also for the world we don't know – one that lies just ahead. They will need to be agile learners, adaptable and flexible as they change careers and pursue opportunities we may not even be able to envision today.

The students, faculty and staff of Central, Eastern, Southern and Western are poised to help lead the way in advancing our great state. They trust that those in a position to do so will ensure that they are provided with their fair share of our state's resources to assist in this fundamental and essential effort. And the businesses that look to these graduates for their future workforce share this interest in the state's commitment to education as an engine of economic development.

As never before, we are working closely with the state's business community, because we recognize that we are in this together, and Connecticut's future depends on all of us.

Along those lines, I would also like to mention that the Connecticut State University System, working collaboratively with a statewide coalition of partners, is convening a series of Town Meetings to be held at each of the four universities just over a month from now. The Town Meetings will highlight the important role of education – from pre-kindergarten to college – in Connecticut's economic well-being. At these Town Meetings, leaders and citizens from throughout our state will be discussing the value of education and its impact on Connecticut, now and in the future.

As part of the planning of this series, we have welcomed the active involvement of some of our state's leading business organizations, and we look forward to their input every step of the way. We would welcome the direct involvement of the Department of Economic and Community Development as well, and we have committed to sharing the feedback we receive so that you may incorporate any relevant information into the Economic Strategic Plan that you will be developing.

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with this. Connecticut certainly has a number of important issues that deserve our attention, and which significantly impact our economic well-being. Transportation, housing, health care, and energy costs certainly come to mind. But I submit that any discussion, and any agenda about how to prepare Connecticut for a sound and thriving economic future must also include education, front and center.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and we look forward to working with you as we each work with others to enhance the economic strength and the quality of life in our state for years to come.