



Testimony by Dr. Braden Hosch
Board of Regents for Higher Education
Connecticut State Colleges & Universities
Before the Program Review and
Investigations Committee
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Thank you Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Braden Hosch, and I am the Director of Policy and Research, as well as the Interim Director of Academic Affairs, for the Board of Regents for Higher Education which governs four state universities, 12 community colleges, and Charter Oak State College, the state's only public, fully-online institution. The Board also holds broad responsibilities for state policy for public higher education under Section 10a-6 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Public and private higher education in Connecticut principally and historically serves a younger demographic—preparing those young people to excel in the job markets of the future. Typically, we service students who leave our programs of study in their 20s and enter Connecticut's workforce. In fact, 95 percent of our graduates go on to live and work in Connecticut and they generate years of tax and social benefits for the state and their communities.

Of the over 180,000 undergraduates enrolled in Connecticut institutions in 2011 credit programs, only 5,899 (3.3 percent) were age 50 or older. Over half of these students were attending the Connecticut Community Colleges, accounting for 5.6 percent of total community college enrollment.

We have seen a steady rise in these numbers—from 2,538 in 1991 to 2,915 in 2001 to 3,250 in 2011—representing over 700 students and a 28 percent change over 20 years. While notable, the rise in participation by the 50 and older demographic is dwarfed by the increase in students under 25 years old. In 2001 we had 20,320 25-and-under students, which rose to 34,042 in 2011. This represents an increase of 68 percent, almost 14,000 new 25-and-under students.

Among the almost 36,000 graduate students across all the ConnSCU institutions in the state, only 2,303, or 6.4 percent, are age 50 or older. This is a modest uptick for older students, but is not likely to be a barometer for future growth.

Essentially, what these data show is that only a small fraction of the higher education system is used by individuals over age 50 to pursue credit-based degree and certificate programs. As always, we are cognizant that this could change given anticipated changes in retirement patterns.

Non-credit programs and enrollments, especially at the community colleges, are where we see higher participation rates by older students. Non-credit programs do not lead to formal awards, so students are not eligible for federal financial aid programs through Title IV of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Outside of this statutory and regulatory framework surrounding financial aid, institutions have had broad flexibility to meet local needs. Through the CCC Board Policy Manual (6.5.2.III.B) the Community College Board granted Colleges the authority to set appropriate fees and costs in these programs. In many instances, programs are developed to meet specific needs in local workforce areas, but they also offer opportunities for personal enrichment.

Among the community colleges, in 2011 31,067 students participated in non-credit coursework. Of these, 6,840, or 22 percent, were age 55 and older, and another 6,020, or 19.4 percent, were age 45-54.

It is reasonable to estimate that about 30 percent of this group also falls in the 50 or older range within the scope of the PRI study.

In 2013, the Board of Regents spent approximately \$5 million on non-credit, vocationally-based program offerings. The courses are varied, ranging from personal development to federally-funded, workforce specific programs. Due to the diffuse nature of these offerings, data are only available for a small subset of the total student population. However, we are seeing declining trends in the participation of non-credit programs. Decreasing state appropriations have caused an increase in the cost to a student population that is not eligible for federal Title IV financial aid. These growing costs are likely contributing to declining enrollment.

The colleges and universities are continually engaged in efforts to ensure that the non-credit coursework meets the demands of the modern workforce and employers. Working closely with organizations including Workforce Investment Boards, the Department of Labor, the Department of Economic and Community Development, CBIA, CCAT and others' help, the Colleges and Universities make coursework relevant to real world opportunity .

These outreach efforts have led to some notable successes. For example, Asnuntuck Community College, in partnership with United Technologies Corp. (UTC), developed a special seven-week, 280-hour program with the express mission of retraining 60 current UTC employees, many over 50-years-old, who were at risk of losing their employment in the absence of updated skills. These workers received intensive training in CNC machining, metrology, mathematics, and blueprint reading. Graduates of the program were then reassigned within UTC, and able to continue working.

Also, between 2011 and 2013, the Manufacturing Technology Center enrolled 92 individuals over 50 who were seeking certificates. Of these students, 79 received certificates, and 69 have been placed with employers related to their course of study. Thanks to the Legislature's investment, the Board of Regents has been able to expand this model program to Quinebaug Valley, Housatonic, and Naugatuck Community Colleges to serve even more students.

There are further opportunities to capitalize on expanding successful programs. Data from the Department of Labor and the Department of Economic and Community Development detail the expectation for future growth in five career clusters: advanced manufacturing, allied health, hospitality, financial services, and information technology. While the Asnuntuck manufacturing program has been exported to other colleges, the Board is currently examining its current offerings in the other four areas as it encourages community colleges to refocus on their critical workforce development missions.

Examples like the partnership with UTC for worker retraining show that direct employer-college relationships benefit both employer and student, and as part of the long-term planning process in which the board is currently engaged, we will be seeking private-sector business partners for specific programs in these clusters. This will lead to a higher level of confidence on the part of the college that it is offering relevant programming, a higher level of confidence on the part of the student that he or she is being adequately prepared for the specific needs of employers, and a higher level of confidence on the part of the employer that it will receive job-candidates ready to immediately contribute. This process and renewed emphasis on career training will open additional opportunities to the 50+ population.

Finally, I want to stress the role that Charter Oak State College plays in providing opportunities for the target population. From 2009-2013, Charter Oak awarded 2,870 degrees and certificates. Fifteen percent, or 435, of these went to students over 50 years old. Charter Oak's programs are competency-based thereby giving older students an opportunity to parlay their years of career training and life experience into course credit. We expect that Charter Oak will continue to expand its portfolio of offerings in conjunction with the Board of Regents' long-term strategic planning process, which is currently under way.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here today. I welcome any questions you may have at this time.