

Tipping Point

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The New England 2020 report, released summer 2006, states that in the next 13 years our workforce will change dramatically. Minority groups will make up a significantly larger percentage of our workforce. However, higher education has not been as accessible for these groups, resulting in lower college attendance and graduation rates than white students. The report predicts that if nothing is done to reverse this trend, by 2020 Connecticut will experience a shortage of educated workers.

In today's world, where most jobs require at least a bachelor's degree, we have to ask: has our approach to higher education been responsible? Have our actions really addressed the core needs in higher education? Now more than ever before these questions are important. We find ourselves at a critical juncture where a lack of a responsible approach may prove devastating for the future of Connecticut's economy.

The Connecticut State University System (CSUS) — Central in New Britain, Eastern in Willimantic, Southern in New Haven, and Western in Danbury— already functions as “Universities of Opportunities,” but to increase minority enrollment and retention these institutions require additional full-time professors to guide and mentor these young men and women.

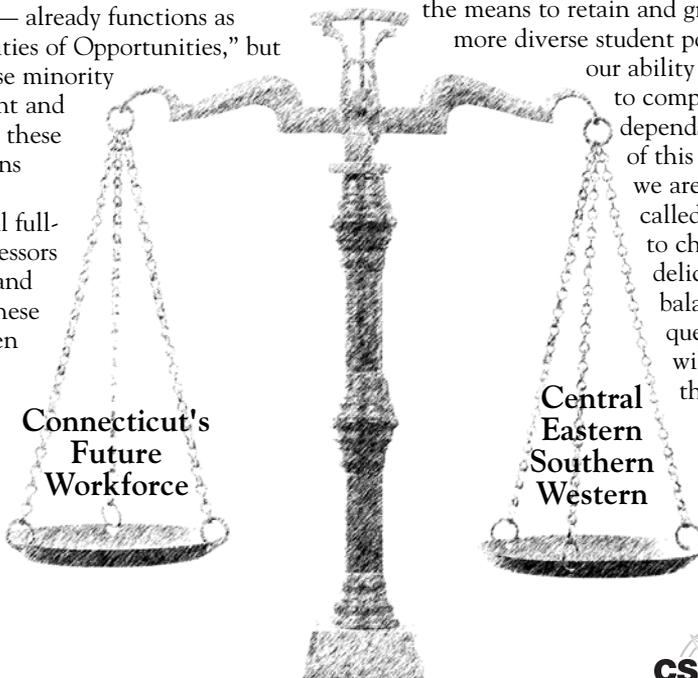
Lower full-time faculty/student ratios have been shown to increase retention and graduation rates. Obtaining the needed number of professors is, however, another story. We can heed our collective call to responsibility by working to refocus our legislators' approach to funding higher education.

Today, the Connecticut State University System currently serves the state well:

- 93 percent of CSUS students are Connecticut residents.
- Over 85 percent of recent CSUS graduates live and work in the state.

But these statistics will soon be very different if we do not change our focus. We're at the tipping point. The success of minorities in higher education is no longer a “minority issue” – it is a Connecticut issue. Remarkably, CSUS educates more students than the University of Connecticut, yet state funding has not kept pace with student enrollment or student needs. The scales must be tipped as every state student deserves the right to higher education.

All of our state universities must have the means to retain and graduate a more diverse student population — our ability as a state to compete depends on it. All of this rests on us; we are being called to action to change this delicate balance. The question is: will we heed the call?



One system, four public universities—
Central Connecticut State University. Eastern Connecticut State University.
Southern Connecticut State University. Western Connecticut State University.

