

# Workforce Brownout?

The problem with screwing in a lightbulb is that it's dark to begin with. So, over the last few weeks we tried to shed light on a powerful issue important to all of us – the linked consequences of funding for higher education and our economy.

Connecticut is facing changing demographics and critical workforce shortages. For example, we rank next to last in educating new nurses. In four years, the state is projected to be short 11,000 registered nurses. By 2020, that deficit is predicted to double. But here's the dilemma – while many are pounding on the doors to get in, our nursing schools are forced to turn away students. There are simply not enough faculty to teach them. Other faculty are also needed to allow those students to fulfill general education requirements.

This is not an isolated dilemma. The *New England 2020* report argues that higher education is less accessible to our growing minority population. The shortage of faculty is again a barrier. As a consequence, the report predicts that Connecticut will soon experience a shortage of educated workers. The loss of educated workers would be devastating to Connecticut's economy.

There is light at the end of this tunnel. High quality education is in place at every point on our state compass

– The Connecticut State University System (CSUS) – Central in New Britain, Eastern in Willimantic, Southern in New Haven, and Western in Danbury.

CSUS already delivers more educated workers than any public university system in Connecticut. 93 percent of CSUS students are Connecticut residents. Over 85 percent of CSUS graduates live and work in the state. CSUS produces more nurses (BSN degrees) than any other institution in Connecticut. But as good as these numbers are, for every student we graduate, other students miss out. This means Connecticut misses out.

The writing is on the wall. If we don't invest in our public university system, we'll not only short-circuit young minds, we'll empower an economic brownout as well.

The math is simple:  
 more faculty = more graduates = more educated workers. In addition, a lower student/full-time faculty ratio will increase retention and graduation rates. CSUS is poised to address these significant challenges, but we need more state support to do so.

Let's work together to keep those bright minds shining.

