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A Thank You from Students and Alumni

By *William Faraclas (SCSU)*



CCSU Alumnus Michael Markowicz (left) and CCSU graduate student Dejenne Monley (right)

On Thursday, January 23, CSU-AAUP invited an undergraduate student, a graduate student, and an alumnus or alumna from each CSU campus to share the impact of a CSU education on their lives with members of the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), and members of the Higher Education Committee of the Connecticut State Legislature. See video of the event here ([Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)).

The words of the students and alumni were terrifically moving, as they described their wonderful experiences at our CSU campuses, along with some of the obstacles they had to overcome. A striking theme of their presentations centered on the caring and indispensable roles played by faculty and staff at our institutions in helping them find their ways. Many of the speakers revealed that they started out not having educational or life goals – some previously having found no joy in learning – making statements, such as, "I was lost," "I had no sense of direction," "I had no idea what I wanted to do..." But every one of them went on to say, "I found myself at CSU," and they all gave credit to our exceptional faculty and staff.

Members of the staff also helped students succeed, through advisement, counseling and other means of support. The speakers characterized our campuses as caring communities. A Southern graduate went to her Department Chair for a signature and was asked, "Why are you here?" When she answered, "To get a signature," the question was restated, "Why are you here at Southern?" and an extended, life-altering discussion commenced.

One student described our universities as "a cradle of opportunity," noting that for many students a CSU campus was the first choice of a college to attend.

Asked what they would like the BOR to know, in addition to what already had been stated, panelists said:

- "CSU students are capable."
- "Everyone cares; we're not just a number."
- "CSU is many students' first choice."
- "Support the faculty. Support the staff."



Pictured from left to right: CCSU undergraduate student Heidi Eilenberger, ECSU graduate student Christine Colenbaugh, ECSU undergraduate student Monique Duimaine, and SCSU Alumna Allison Bass

A Thank You *Continued*



WCSU Alumnus Shamar Lamb (left)
and WCSU undergraduate student
Corey Phillip Paris (right)

BOR President Gregory Gray praised the students for their stirring presentations, and very graciously said to the faculty and staff in the audience that we should be able to sleep well, having seen the excellent fruits of our labors. An alumna of Southern summed everything up very beautifully; after experiencing extraordinary loss, she came to Southern, and found not only a great education, but also a place where she was embraced and supported in her grief. She said, "College was preparation for every aspect of my happiness." Again, video of the entire event is available here ([Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)). You can also view the program from the event [here](#).

**Editor's Note:* While the event was a celebration of CSU successes, only President Gray and President Miller (CCSU) were in attendance, along with several senior staff members of the BOR and of two of our four universities. The only Regent at the meeting was Professor Stephen Adair, the Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee and ex-officio member of the BOR. Of the remaining 17 BOR members six sent their regrets and eleven never responded to CSU-AAUP's invitation. However, many faculty members from all four universities attended and found it to be a gratifying evening.

CSU-AAUP Member Benefits

At the time of hire, all faculty are automatically members of the CSU-AAUP bargaining unit, but to take advantage of a variety of AAUP member benefits, an individual must fill out a membership form to become a member of the professional organization CSU-AAUP.

There is no additional cost for membership. Becoming a member entitles faculty to run for elected office and the privilege of voting in chapter elections. Members will also receive discounts on the purchase of academic regalia, entrance fees to certain nationwide amusement parks, car rentals, tires and tire services, legal services and much more.

Click [here](#) for more details on the benefits offered or [here](#) to fill out a membership form.