



THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Assembly Standing Committee on

Higher Education

Public Hearing

Ensuring Access to a Quality and

Affordable Education: Community Colleges

Testimony of

Dr. Dennis Golladay

Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges

State University of New York, System Administration

March 20, 2009

New York, NY

Good morning, Committee Chair Glick and honorable committee members.

I am Dennis Golladay, Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges of the State University of New York, and I am joined today by three of our community college presidents: Dr. Sean Fanelli, President of Nassau Community College; Dr. Mamie Howard Golladay, President of Sullivan County Community College; and Dr. Andrew Matonak, President of Hudson Valley Community College.

We appreciate very much the opportunity to speak with you today not only about the vital contributions which the community colleges make to higher education in the State of New York, but also to the economic advancement of the State.

The community colleges of the State University are thirty strong, encompassing the length and breadth of the State from Long Island in the east, through the North Country and the Southern Tier, to Buffalo in the west. The design behind – and the beauty of – this wide disbursement of the community colleges was to give virtually every prospective college student in the State geographical access to an institution of higher education.

But that access is more than geographical. It is an academic accessibility, too. Because a community college offers admission to all applicants in the sponsorship area with a recent high school diploma or its equivalent, access to those who can benefit from a college education is essentially open.

That accessibility has made the community colleges an increasingly important sector of higher education, and enrollments have skyrocketed accordingly. In the fall enrollment of this 2008-2009 academic year, the community colleges accounted for nearly 222,000 – or over half – of SUNY's 440,000 college credit students. In terms of SUNY's total undergraduate population, the community colleges enroll approximately 56%, and nearly 72% of all first and second year students. In the last ten years, community college credit enrollments across the State have increased an amazing 21.8%, and in this current economic climate where students and their families are seeking an affordable quality higher education more than ever, community college enrollments are expected to increase even more dramatically. (Those enrollment figures for college credit students do not include the large numbers of students who participate in the community colleges' important non-credit programs. In 2007-08, for example, there were some 259,357 non-credit registrations in 21,015 non-credit courses of which approximately 22% were for business and industry training.)

In addition to traditional sources of enrollment, SUNY's community colleges are also experiencing increased enrollments from what has been identified as a national phenomenon – the reverse transfer. Aptly named, the reverse transfer is a student who instead of transferring from a community college to a four-year institution, transfers from a four-year program to a community college. In the fall of 2007, for example, 51.6% of the 8,773 students transferring into a community college came from four-year

institutions, and by anecdotal accounts, that number and percentage have also increased dramatically over the past year. Historically, there may be several reasons for such transfers, but the recent increase is most likely due to one outstanding attribute of community colleges – affordability.

Affordability has always been an important factor when students and their families consider a quality higher education, and SUNY's community colleges certainly meet their expectations. The SUNY community college state-wide average tuition rate for full-time students this current year is \$3,275, and with the assistance of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), the tuition rate for low and moderate income students is much less. That compares favorably with the SUNY state-operated campus rate of \$4,660, and compared with the tuitions of the private colleges, it is easy to understand why SUNY's community colleges are considered a bargain investment for the first two years of a college education. Community college education is also a bargain for the State; the average 2007-08 net operating cost per full-time student of \$8,504 is the lowest per pupil cost in the State, not just for higher education, but for any sector or level of education.

Throughout their existence, SUNY's community colleges have striven to maintain that affordability in their tuition rates and student fees. Seeking tuition increases as a last resort only when other major revenue sources – State funding and local sponsor support – have proven insufficient for proper academic operation, SUNY's community college tuition increases on a state-wide average have remained below the rate of inflation as measured by the Higher Education Price Index (or HEPI).

As you know, the original statutory formula underlying the operating funding of community colleges was to be on an equal basis among three partners: the State, the local sponsor, and the students. That 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 formula was replaced in 1971-72 by the Full Opportunity Program which was predicated on a larger funding role for the State if a community college essentially agreed to an open-door admission policy for residents in their sponsor area with a recent high school diploma or who were veterans. The new formula envisioned a funding formula of up to 40% of operational funding from the State, 26.7% from the local sponsor, and 33.3% from the students. Unfortunately, in the thirty-six year history of that more recent statutory formula, the State portion of the funding for community college operational budgets on a state-wide average has only been achieved once (1975-76), and for all thirty colleges on an individual campus basis, never. The result has been that a heavier burden of the operational cost of publicly-supported community college education has been placed on the students – a negative impact on both accessibility and affordability.

It follows, then, that the answer to the question of “how New York State can keep community colleges both affordable and accessible while ensuring a quality education” is relatively straightforward: appropriate State funding for their operating budgets. We all realize that in this time of economic crisis for the State and for the nation, public funding for the community colleges cannot be as robust as we all – educators and legislators alike – might wish. But we also know that community colleges are a major

ingredient in the road to economic recovery and that deep budget cuts in a time of expanding enrollments are counter-productive – to the students, to the colleges, and to the communities they serve.

All of us in community college circles are well aware of the impact of the economic downturn on students, families, and businesses, and on public officials responsible for leading us through the crisis. And it goes without saying that we see ourselves as partners with you in helping the State's economy not only to recover, but to grow and expand beyond its former levels by providing the skilled and educated workers indispensable to the recovery and to New York's rightful place in the global economy.

The three presidents with me today will be detailing more specific information on the ways in which the community colleges play a vital role in workforce and economic development through their programs in areas such as green technology, nanotechnology, nursing and allied health fields. You will also notice that they represent the broad spectrum of our community colleges in terms of size, geography, and populations served. Dr. Howard Golladay will begin, followed by Dr. Matonak, and finally from Dr. Fanelli.