

My name is Kathleen Moore, and I am an adjunct faculty member at the Community College of Vermont, which has 12 centers around the state and is second largest state college after UVM.

I have taught English and Communications at CCV for ten years. In addition, I am a ten-hour-per-week Faculty Coach for low-income and first-generation students at the Montpelier CCV site, and I also provide two hours per week of academic tutoring. I'm here to support Chancellor Spaulding's request for a \$4 million increase to the Vermont State College System and to support Representative Hill's bill H-122. I'd like to talk about the students I serve, and the colleagues I serve with, and how this low-funding environment impacts them.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

I want to bring a special focus on first-generation, low-income, and non-traditional students who make up a large proportion of CCV's student body.

The average age of a CCV student is 27, and many students are both working and rearing children. And because so many of the students are low-income, they face additional challenges related to meeting their needs for housing, physical and mental health, transportation, and childcare, and even school supplies.

These needs would be easily dealt with in a middle-class family with resources. However, for low-income students, these issues create barriers to learning and to completing their education.

For instance, in just the last six months, I have had students struggling with domestic violence, with significant mental health issues, and with persistent physical health challenges. These are clear obstacles to learning and to completing one's education.

There are no onsite mental health counseling services. However, I and the others at CCV do our best to support students through advising and coaching, and by making referrals to shelter services, to mental health services, and to other community resources. -

In addition, even what middle-class families might consider only a very small challenge – such as a broken computer – presents serious obstacles to students with fewer resources.

How long will it take to get the money to fix the computer? And how far behind will that student fall when she cannot keep up with course work - I have seen it take weeks and I have seen students fail classes because of such seemingly small obstacles.

Yes, the college has SOME loaner computers, but those are often spoken for at the beginning of the term. Yes, the college has computer labs, but transportation issues –

compounded by the fact that the college is not open on weekends--create even more challenges.

So, those are the students and a sampling of their challenges. That's who comes through the door – wanting an education, wanting to change their lives, wanting to contribute to their communities.

I want to now point to another reality concerning college student success which is that the research shows that it is strongly connected to the relationships that students form with faculty members over time.

That may seem like an obvious fact; however, CCV is the only community college in the country that relies 100% on adjunct faculty, which, in my view, significantly hampers the ability of faculty to form such supportive relationships.

Notably, my colleagues do not have offices, nor are they paid for office hours. And if they are to provide advising or mentoring for students, they must do it on borrowed time and in borrowed space -- in hallways or open classrooms...often when that faculty member is attempting to get to a teaching obligation on another campus (since many faculty teach at multiple colleges to make ends meet) or to get back to a "day job."

Clearly, this is not ideal for students, many of whom would welcome the opportunity to form mentoring relationships with faculty members.

However, I want to point out something else to the committee: First-generation and low-income students often don't even know that a mentoring relationship is possible. It's not in their worldview. They don't know that middle-class and upper-class students benefit from such relationships at school and in their careers.

To begin to provide such support for students, faculty need to be able to ACTIVELY encourage it and be available...something that is very difficult to do at our community college where there are no full-time faculty.

IMPACT ON FACULTY

Of course, the faculty members do their best under such conditions. My colleagues are dedicated and would not be teaching if they did not truly believe in the power of education to change lives.

I would like to make one last point to the committee, though:
The reality is that many CCV faculty are also struggling financially.

We are significantly underpaid, and are the poorest paid employees in an already-low-pay situation at the Community College.

Further, faculty are not paid between terms; I had trouble paying my rent this month because there was an almost eight-week gap between paychecks because of the Christmas break. Another colleague told me that it takes her many weeks to “right” herself financially after those unpaid breaks. I am aware of at least one colleague who has had to resort to the use of food stamps to feed her family.

Further: We receive no benefits: No retirement, no healthcare, no disability insurance, no holiday or vacation pay.

We also don't work if our classes are cancelled, which can happen because of poor enrollments, creating further financial hardships.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I teach and my colleagues teach because we love it. We see that it makes a real contribution in our communities.

I therefore urge this committee to find ways to remove the burden of funding higher education from the backs of students, families and faculty.

That's why I want to ask you to support Chancellor Spaulding's request for a \$4 million increase to the Vermont State College System and to support Representative Hill's bill H-122 as a beginning point for rectifying the funding gap. Thank you.

Kathleen Moore / PO Box 39 / Marshfield, VT 05658