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To: CEDHH Advisory Board  
Date: April 22, 2015  
Re: Centralized Location for CEDHH Program

When Jacquelyn Sessa contacted me to request a letter of support for the relocation of the Collegiate Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program (CEDHH), I was glad that she reached out to me.

Although I resigned from NWCC as the Counselor for the Hearing Impaired after 25 years of service in July 2014, my heart is still with the CEDHH program. During my tenure, I have had the pleasure of seeing many students grow in their academic and leadership skills. These students were the fortunate ones who were able to relocate to the Northwest Corner. As I indicated at the CEDHH/Interpreter Preparation Program (IPP) Advisory Board meeting in May 2014, the majority of Deaf adults do not have the flexibility to make the long commute to the rural town of Winsted. In addition, there is no public transportation. These two (2) issues were the main factors noted by community college disability specialists in an email survey that I sent out before my resignation. Eight out of 11 replies indicated “transportation was the number one obstacle to accessing educational programs.” In my tenure, I often provided consultations for these specialists since they had no background knowledge about the educational and cultural impacts of Deafness.

Because I had made my plans to resign known early on, Dean Bouffard advised me to make it official well in advance, to allow ample time to search for a qualified candidate to serve both the deaf students and other students with disabilities. I was grateful that she saw the need for advanced planning to serve the Deaf community. I submitted my resignation letter in February 2014, giving a 4 month notice.

Although I was hired in 1989 as the *Counselor for the Hearing Impaired*, as jurisdictioned in the 1980's, I expected that the posted position would be expanded to include other students with disabilities. To recap, I accepted additional responsibilities when the ADA (Americans with Disability) Act passed in 1990. Over the years, the number of students with other disabilities expanded from four (4) students to 60-70 students. Working a full load of 35 hours per week, I was able to be accessible to students with various disabilities as well as the CEDHH students.

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**ATTACHMENT “B”**

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I was quite alarmed when I saw the part time Learning Disability Specialist position posted with restricted hours and the qualification of "ASL Skills Preferred." As I explained to Wendy Bovia, the Human Resources Director, a learning disability specialist does not have the skills to advise a Deaf or hard of hearing student. This was evidenced by the admission of the other community college disability specialists who consulted with me at monthly meetings or by phone. It is imperative to understand and be fluent in American Sign Language in order to adequately provide the specialized educational assessment tools and class placement advisement for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. In addition, there was a 35 hour per week advisor position posted at the same time. There would be a much greater chance of securing a more qualified person to serve both the Deaf and other students with disabilities with a full time position. Wendy seemed appreciative of the information, but the position had already been posted. I also expressed my concern at the May 2014 CEDHH Advisory Board meeting.

Although community colleges have a reputation for reaching out to less advantaged students, Deaf and hard of hearing students have been left out of the community pool. Because students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing do not have the incidental learning that comes from being able to overhear conversations from family and other situations, there is a language delay. At Northwestern CT Community College, the educational specialists, and interpreter/tutors staff have done a stellar job of fostering student academic and personal growth, which has enabled many students to graduate and secure gainful employment. This rural northwest corner opportunity needs to expand to the entire state.

The conversation of relocating the program has been ensuing for many years based on student and Deaf community feedback. Naugatuck Community College has been discussed as a viable option due to the many technical programs that would be suitable for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, public transportation, highway accessibility, viable housing opportunities for students who may prefer to live close to the college, as well as opportunities to partner with Western CT State University or other universities.

The merging of the Board of Regents provides an opportune time for the CEDHH program to become a centrally located, a 'statewide program' that would be a feeder school for Deaf students to continue with a bachelors' degree.

Now is the time for Connecticut to become a model for other states, and make a national impact. I'd like to request that this letter be provided to the Board of Regents along with other documented support for the CEDHH to be a centrally located, state wide expanded program.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

Roseann Dennerlein,  
Former CEDHH Counselor