

**Testimony of Stephen Monroe Tomczak, Ph.D., L.M.S.W. President of the Southern Connecticut State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors.**

I am Dr. Stephen Monroe Tomczak, a faculty member at Southern Connecticut State University and President of our university's chapter of AAUP. In July, CSU-AAUP distributed a [petition](#) – which, within two weeks, was signed by over 1,100 of your constituents - faculty members at the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities.

On July 29<sup>th</sup> CSU-AAUP attempted to present this petition at the Board of Regents meeting, requesting to read it into the record. That request was ignored – and, so on behalf of my colleagues who signed the petition, I am taking this opportunity to make sure that this petition is presented to state authorities who will listen. **The [petition](#) reads as follows:**

The impact and tragedy of COVID-19 continue to unfold. More than 130,000 have died, cases are increasing in many states, and communities of color are over-represented among those who are suffering.

As a university system providing a vital public good and committed to social justice, CSCU has an obligation to protect those working and learning on our four campuses from the effects of the disease and its potential spread. Doing so will simultaneously protect our families, our local communities, and the entire state of Connecticut.

To ensure safety and quality education and to minimize disruption to our students and our own work, it is important that faculty rights established in the CSU-AAUP - Board of Regents Collective Bargaining Agreement are not overlooked or discarded. As both work and learning conditions are transformed during this pandemic, the undersigned call on the BOR to provide for the following:

1) **Safety.** Prioritize the health of the entire campus community and take all steps to reduce virus transmission, even at economic cost. End pressure on facilities operations, deans, and department chairs to hit target numbers for on-campus class sections and on-ground percentages. Plans for reopening libraries, counseling centers, and athletic facilities should be made in accordance with scientific evidence that prioritizes health and safety.

2) **Professional discretion.** Give all employees the choice of working remotely or on-ground, with no questions asked. They know how best to do their jobs and can be trusted to make rational decisions as the pandemic evolves. Teaching faculty have academic freedom that includes the choice of modality.

They are the only ones who can judge which mode (online asynchronous, synchronous, hybrid, or hyflex) best suits their pedagogical goals under the current crisis.

3) **Privacy.** Do not require employees to go through an ADA or other medical certification process or to take unpaid leave, as long as the pandemic lasts. The pandemic induced changes in work conditions (and not a change in individuals' underlying health). The requirement to disclose additional personal medical conditions or those of household members is a violation of privacy and may negatively impact individuals.

4) **No Harm.** Work hardships attributable to the increased and evolving demands of the pandemic should not negatively impact annual evaluations, renewals, or job offers for part-time or full-time faculty (teaching, librarians, counselors, and coaches and trainers). The tenure clock should either be paused or extended.

We the undersigned have grave concerns about the unique situation of universities as potential sites of the spread of COVID-19. We are proud of the vital function the CSUs serve in the State and region. We respect our students' aspirations and appreciate the complexities of their lives. Now more than ever, our working conditions are our students' learning conditions

Thank you for the opportunity to present this [petition](#), which, as indicated, was signed by over 1100 Connecticut State University faculty and several of our colleagues at the community colleges. It describes clearly the issues we are here to advocate on today.