



**Testimony to the Senate Budget Committee Public Hearings
Montclair State University—March 13, 2012**

My name is Richard Wolfson. I'm a Professor here at Montclair State University, in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching. I am also the president of AFT Local 1904 which represents the Montclair Faculty, Professional Staff, and Librarians.

On behalf the entire Montclair community, I welcome you to our campus and to University Hall, which includes 265,000 square feet of classrooms, lecture halls, study spaces, laboratories, offices, our IT core, and this wonderful conference facility. If you have time, I invite you to stop in to the ADP Center for Teacher Preparation and Learning Technologies which supports our highly regarded Teacher Education program—it's on the first floor.

Facilities like this are vital to our University's core mission: providing college education for New Jersey students, and supporting graduate programs that help New Jersey maintain excellence in the workplace. Unfortunately, such facilities are increasingly difficult to finance due to dwindling state allocations; tuition dollars alone are insufficient, and this year's proposed budget provides no more this year than last. Montclair State President Susan Cole has stated "Notwithstanding the governor's statement in his budget address, our analysis of the proposed budget, confirmed by discussions with staff in the Office of Management and Budget, is that there is no increase in direct aid for the senior public colleges and universities." Senate President Sweeney calls Governor Christie's description of an increase simply "smoke and mirrors."

This would be bad enough in simpler times. But these times are complicated by the proposal to reorganize UMDNJ, University Hospital, Rutgers-Camden, and Rowan University. I won't bore you with the details, as I know you've heard the proposals, but the bottom line for me is: Where in the budget is the approximately 1.5 billion dollars it is estimated that the reorganization will consume without any increased functionality, facility, or program at any of the institutions involved? In the past I would have thought: What's the big deal? Change some signs on the buildings and make some structural changes in the organizations, and you're done. But when you look closely at what's really involved, it turns out that you're far from done. Employees at the different institutions are working under different contracts. There's the status differential between Rutgers and Rowan. And the computer systems! If you think merging data and systems is easy, do a Google search for "Montclair State and Oracle" for some interesting reading. Our budget and timelines for this Oracle project have more than doubled, and the legal bills are simply

astonishing. And we are one small system with one data set. Can you imagine what dealing with systems on the proposed scale will entail?

Perhaps there will be a bond issue, as has been bandied about for years. But that will be for capital improvement and maintenance and won't be paying for the reorganization. Reorganization monies will come from institutional budgets—which means higher tuition and fees. And while this budget does increase tuition assistance, it's not to the tune that will be necessary to deal with the projected \$1.5 billion in expenses—or more, if past New Jersey projects are any indication.

It's time to stem the gradual privatization of our public higher education system by starving it of public funds. The proposed budget includes a significant increase in financial aid, but is essentially flat concerning money that can be used to support the educational missions of the institutions. Floating a major bond issue in November to help cover capital costs will help, but it won't address the staggering costs of a reorganization that is questionable at best, benefitting Rutgers, Rowan, South Jersey, and Cooper Hospital to the detriment of the other institutions ardently trying to keep our best students in New Jersey.

Last year at the Assembly hearings, I said: "It's time that we, the people of New Jersey, accept that the only way forward is to rescind, at least partially, the Whitman tax cuts and bring back a fair, progressive income tax: one that acknowledges those below the poverty line, holds the rich to their fair share, and releases middle-class families from paying more than their fair share." I leave you with that thought again. A 10% tax cut as proposed by the Governor is simply the wrong way to go for the health and wellbeing of the citizens of New Jersey. There are few investments a state can make that yield a higher return than investing in higher education. It's time that our budgets reflect that reality.

Thank you for your time.

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