

Archived Information

**Sondra Wilson, Student Regent for the Tennessee Board of Regents & SGA President
Columbia State Community College
Statement to the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education
December 8-9, 2005**

Good afternoon, my name is Sondra Wilson. I am a sophomore from Columbia State Community College, in Columbia, TN where I was born and raised. I am a high school graduate of Spring Hill High School. While attending school, I was the student government president, served on other organizations throughout my high school tenure.

I have a sister whom is two years older than me. She is a nursing student at Columbia State Community College and plans on graduating next year.

Columbia State was not in my plans at all for higher education. As a senior in high school, I had planned on attending University of Tennessee at Knoxville, or Middle Tennessee State University. I had applied and been accepted to both but as it came down to the wire I could not make a decision so I chose to go to Columbia State.

However, I did not want to attend Columbia State because it was much like the thirteenth grade all of my friends would be attending CSCC as well. I was not a happy camper my first semester. As time begun to pass by I started to enjoy my time at Columbia State, I actually enjoyed it so much I do not want to leave.

I became involved as the senator of SGA, then vice-president, and currently the president, I am the Student Regent for TN board of regents. CSCC has offered me so much as a student. I feel that the smaller classes and the ability to work hands on with the professors have benefited me tremendously.

Looking back, I feel that I was not adequately prepared for college. There was a major disconnection from the high school with my college. My sister attended another high school within the same county because their academics were a little more challenging.

I feel that my sister received a lot better education than I. Her high school offered honor classes as well as AP college courses. With my high school offering dual enrollment, which many of my classmates took that opportunity to get ahead and take college courses while still enrolled in high school. I think there is a so often a disconnection between high schools and colleges. I was not sure what to expect once I attended college but my sister was able to guide me because she had already completed two years. I feel that counseling from high school advisors are lacking knowledge about colleges which in turns puts the students at a bind not knowing exactly what to do and leaving them to make decisions based on their knowledge.

The classes I took in high school were literally a joke, the syllabus for the majority of my classes went much like, outline the chapter, define the key terms, and answer the summary questions at the end. Doing this would more than likely guarantee at least "B" in the class. The expectations for students are too low; teachers are not preparing the students for a college course. In college, the professor is not going to cut the student any slack what goes for one student goes for all. As

in high school the teacher teaches more like one is still in middle school, not much lecturing goes on, to where in college all one sees is lecturing.

A lot of this has to do with the fact that many high school teachers have been out of college so long they are not sure what to tell the students to expect because they do not know. My recommendation would be that the department heads, division chairs, or supervisors of each subject at the high school work hands on with a local college and come up with a curriculum that somewhat coincides with the college. I know that no matter how extensive the high school works there is no substantial way to prepare the student for college to the fullest extent but I do feel that a lot more can be done to retain students in college.

It is obvious if students put forth some effort to apply for scholarships, choose a degree, and purchase books that, they do have some passion to succeed in life. However, it is depressing when the student goes to class and if you are not fortunate, to have a family that backs you more than one hundred percent the drop date for the courses you are enrolled in begins to look like an easier way out. That is when you begin to second-guess careers, being a doctor which could take forever, or working at Target, Nissan, or Saturn which does not look so bad after all.

As student government president, I interact with diverse students on a daily basis. So often, I see my fellow classmates following by the way side; both because the cost of tuition is expensive and college is not what they expected it to be. Sad to say the majority of high school students are not cut out for the college. The standards for education need to be increased and maybe the retention rate for college graduates will increase as well. In addition, so many college students feel the need to be independent therefore they have to move on their own and support themselves. There are not too many scholarships available if you do not have a 3.0 or higher or at least a 22 or your ACT's. It seems as if the well-off students whose parents are doctors or lawyers still come out ahead of the average Joe whose parents may be schoolteachers or work in a factory.

At Columbia State the graduation and transferred out rate of first year full-time students is 39% and the retention rate from fall to fall is 61%. So, the question being is what happened to the other 61% of students that do not graduate or transfer out?

All in all, if the standards and funding for a public school education would increase our country would be up to par with our competing countries which intern would cause a steady increase in the retention rate as well the number of college graduates.

We have to remember that every student is not fortunate to have a family that supports them within the home or is able to afford to send their son/daughter to college. I am fortunate to have a family that fully supports me.