

AAUP

American Association of University Professors, Inc.
1875 Storrs Road, Storrs, CT 06268

Campus Mail: AAUP U-6028

WWW.UCONNAAUP.ORG

Telephone: (860) 487-0450

Fax: (860) 487-0341

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

February 28, 2011

Thomas J. Peters, Professor & President

Edward C. Marth, Executive Director

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriations Committee:

On behalf of the UCONN Chapter of the AAUP, we would like to offer some testimony for the record. We represent the faculty and research professional at the University of Connecticut at Storrs and the regional campuses.

These may not be the worst of times, but they are surely not the best of times.

Most, but not all households are faced with difficult challenges in how to meet daily expenses and the growing difficulty of planning for the near and far term.

This includes faculty and staff at each of our institutions, and every single state employee. We pay every tax increase and bear the burden of declining purchasing power with every furlough day and pay freeze. We now face a greater burden in the concession demands contemplated. We face this with realism as we have in the past, with our life's work in research, teaching and expectations of service in the balance.

Today you are hearing the opening discussions of the reorganization and the impact of the proposed reductions in appropriations for the University of Connecticut, among other institutions worthy of support.

This year's proposals are another in a long line of declining support from the state and forced reliance on tuition increases, larger classes at all levels, fewer classes to choose from, and more adjuncts especially at the regional campuses. Connecticut is not alone in this. A growing number of major institutions are (U. of VA), or are considering (U. of Wisconsin) becoming "state assisted" given the declines in state support and burdens of increased regulation that increase costs. As an institution we are asked to be more efficient and at the same time required to comply with more rules and regulations...some self imposed!

The finger of blame cannot be pointed at any single action, but perhaps waved at the income divide and the tax consequences that follow, the recession impact on the jobs and tax base, the pernicious increase in the cost of health care, and, yes, past decisions that have exhausted the "one-time fixes" and weakened the pension fund. A relatively new federal requirement to pre-fund post-retirement costs as a result of corporate raiding of those benefits (i.e. Enron Corporation) has spiked certain cost obligations.

February 28, 2011

Page Two

Sharing of the burden of this fiscal tsunami will be determined in other forums. We will do what we can and do what we must, just as in the past and with deliberation.

We urge you to consider, what we believe is well intentioned, but bad in consequence, part of what is before you, namely the reversion of hiring authority to a central state office for all but faculty titles.

In the decades since the change and with changing ratio of state support referred to above, the mix of employment has also changed at UCONN. Just as it is no longer a matter of doctors and nurses in hospitals, but a myriad of jobs and titles in between for reasons of specialization, so to specialization has developed in any research university.

This change would have research professionals with doctoral degrees working on funded research and vital to it, be hired by a Hartford office rather than by the faculty member who knows what specialty is needed in research; delay can cause failure in the funded project. And they often need specialists who are not holders of faculty titles who service the labs and sometimes teach undergraduate courses. These are all members of the UCONN AAUP bargaining unit.

Add to this the uniqueness of hiring in athletics, also members of the AAUP bargaining unit. Would someone in a small office at the end of a dimly lit corridor in Hartford decide who the best coach or assistant coach of tennis, or swimming ought to be? Or hold up the appointment and jeopardize the obligations of Title IX for sports obligations?

Perhaps a report on a regular basis to monitor hiring, and focus on titles that seems to overwhelm the teaching and research mission. And, we urge a review of those regulations that lead to a lot of burdensome paperwork and streams of approvals from university bureaucrats dedicated to micromanaging the academic mission. The paperwork requirements for oversight are heavy, repeated, and lead to jobs whose only requirement is to say "no" to necessities of creative efforts.

Recent comments by Mr. Ben Barnes to justify this process are confusing. On one hand, the oversight is sought to improve budgetary decisions, but when possible hiring delays are raised, the response is that the turn-around from OPM should be only one day, based upon the rapidity of electronic communications. The actual communication is, of course, quite rapid. The delays occur when staff scrutinize hiring against many regulations and competing interests. No computer can do that. Only humans can. At a time of decreasing government, the expectation is that fewer review staff will be available and the electronic forms can sit in an electronic mailbox awaiting approval for as long as they previously did in physical mail boxes.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to meeting with you in the course of the next several weeks.