



University of Connecticut

Undergraduate Student Government

Office of the Student Body
President

Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education,

As you know, the University of Connecticut just approved a four-year plan to hire 290 faculty by 2015 while raising tuition between 6% and 7% per year. A large number of students recognize the necessity of this plan because of the dire need for more faculty at UConn. Many students find it difficult to get all the courses they need to graduate on time, forcing them to incur the cost of staying for extra semesters. However, while hiring more faculty is clearly necessary, students do not have the resources to bear the entirety of the cost.

Over the past decade or so, the state has slowly chipped away at its commitment to UConn. When I was born in 1991, the state provided 50% of UConn's operating budget, with the other 50% coming from student fees and private donations. Now in 2012, the state provides only 27.6% of UConn's budget. 2010 was the first year in history that UConn received more money from students than from the state, and the gap has only widened since then. This is setting us on a dangerous path of transitioning from a state university to a merely state-supported university.



I understand that cuts had to be made across the board in order to balance the state's budget. But these sharp reductions in funding cannot be attributed solely to the recession and the resulting budget problems. According to the Connecticut General Assembly's Office of Legislative Research, in 1985, 2.34% of the state's budget went towards funding for UConn. In 2012, this dropped to only 1.11%. It is clear that the state is not simply tightening its belt; it is shifting its priorities away from higher education and towards other programs and projects.

These budget cuts come at the worst possible time for Connecticut residents. A college degree is becoming increasingly necessary to find a decent job. Meanwhile, state

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cuts to higher education are forcing UConn to raise tuition in order to balance its own budget, steadily driving up the cost of this near-necessity beyond what is affordable for many students. Prospective students are either prevented from attending college altogether, or attend college knowing that they will be saddled with massive debt – \$27,800 on average – upon graduation.

UConn is our state's flagship institution of higher education, and it is rising quickly in national rankings. To maintain this momentum while keeping UConn affordable, the state must stop this trend of constant cuts and instead renew its support for higher education. While we cannot expect the state to immediately return to its level of support from 1991, a more reasonable goal would be for the state to commit to funding half the cost of the faculty hiring plan.



This would allow UConn to continue to grow as a national leader, while remaining an affordable option for all talented Connecticut students. An increase in state funding for UConn is not just an investment in our youth – it is an investment in the state's economy. Studies have shown that every state dollar allocated to UConn leads to a \$5 increase in the state's gross domestic product. Investing in higher education is not just good for Connecticut's students, but for everyone who calls this state home.

Sincerely,

Sam Tracy
President of the Student Body
University of Connecticut

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