

STATEMENT ON NEXT GENERATION CONNECTICUT PROPOSAL

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It is my privilege to speak on behalf of this bold new initiative. In supporting the Next Generation Connecticut proposal, I could say many things. I could tell you that I am a professor who has been training students in neuroscience, psychology, psychopharmacology and cognitive science at UCONN for the last 25 years, in the classroom, the teaching lab, and also as a supervisor of individual research projects. In addition, I could tell you about my experience in directing more than 55 undergraduate honors theses, and I also could tell how UCONN is doing an excellent job of producing a large number of well educated and highly trained students, who are prepared to go on to advanced studies, contribute as motivated and innovative members of the workforce, and participate as informed citizens in our society. But in addition to all these positive things, I need to tell you about the pressures we face in trying to keep pace with the increasing student demand in my area. There is a tremendous need for students to receive advanced training in the health sciences, as in other STEM fields, and student interest is tracking that need. Every year, I see more undergraduates desperately seeking the experience they need, including specialized laboratories with advanced training. They need this for their chosen career options, or to be competitive in seeking further training in graduate school, medical school, or other aspects of the health sciences. In my program, we call it the "lab crunch". Ten years ago, we might have had 20-25 students per year enrolled in the behavioral neuroscience laboratory classes. This year, we had 90. Each year, I struggle to make sure the students graduate with the specialized training that they need.

I could go on, and give you many more details about our programs and our students. But with the limited time I have, I would rather talk about you, the legislators who are considering this proposal. I recognize that this has been a difficult few years in the state of Connecticut. The economic crisis, with its torrential recession and its lackluster recovery, would be considered by many as a time for retrenchment and retreat. However, I do not think so, and thankfully Governor Malloy and Dr. Herbst do not think so, and I sincerely hope that you do not think so. Our country has too many instances of crises being met by dreams, innovations, and plans for the future, for us to ignore. After the Great Depression and World War II, our country did not turn inward, or backward, but instead, looked forward, establishing the GI Bill, the space program, and truly unprecedented advancements in science, engineering, and technological innovation. We have been riding that wave for decades... but should it end now? I suggest we must face this crisis as we have done so successfully in the past- by planning for the future. This proposal, aptly named to emphasize the Next Generation of development of our great university, is looking beyond the immediate economic doldrums, and instead focusing on what we need

to guarantee our future. I see a future in which UCONN and the state of Connecticut step up to our challenges and plan for the training of the next generation of scientists, doctors, nurses, health care professionals, engineers, mathematicians, and innovators. I urge you to support this proposal, and set us upon that path.