

65 Timber Drive
Storrs Mansfield, CT 06268

March 4, 2013

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Joint Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Room 3700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Margaret Lamb. I live in Mansfield and work at the University of Connecticut as associate director of the University's Honors Program and also as director of the Office of Undergraduate Research, a unit that supports students across the whole of the University.

I support the Governor's Next Generation CT proposal for three reasons.

First, Connecticut's economy and future wellbeing need increasing numbers of highly skilled graduates who are ready to contribute to the State's current and future workforce needs.

- UConn has an excellent track record of producing highly skilled graduates. I know this from working with the talented students of UConn's Honors Program.
- Each year we attract about 430 students with high academic qualifications to our program. Of our 1749 students, approximately two-thirds concentrate in STEM or business fields. Honors students learn and prepare for their professional futures through a combination of challenging academics, advising tailored to fit each individual, living and learning in an Honors community of peers and mentors, and opportunities for engagement and leadership beyond the classroom. Over 300 Honors students each year complete a rigorous thesis project involving advanced study, independent research, and originality. Our Honors graduates go on to competitive graduate programs and employment in Connecticut and elsewhere. Given that about three-quarters of our students come from Connecticut, it is a regret that their ambitions for graduate school and professional work cannot always be met in Connecticut.
- The Next Generation CT proposal is designed to attract an additional group of 6,580 bright, talented, promising young people to UConn, including 325 students into a STEM Honors Program. The new faculty, facilities, and programs that form parts of the Governor's proposal will ensure that UConn educates these students and our current 22,300 undergraduates in fields that will provide many of the new jobs of the future. For 325 new STEM Honors students, we would provide an Honors Program experience that is as supportive and as effective as what we offer our current Honors students.

Second, support for more highly skilled graduates in STEM fields and other emerging areas of business and innovation requires more investment in faculty and in facilities like science laboratories and design suites.

- The opportunity to work closely with faculty mentors on independent projects of discovery and scholarship offers an undergraduate one of the most engaging, transformative learning experiences of the whole undergraduate education. I know this from working with undergraduates engaged in research projects across the UConn campus.

- The STEM lab is where theory and knowledge gained in the classroom are applied. An independent research project is also where confidence is gained; curiosity is given full rein; problem-solving skills are honed; and deep learning is achieved. In the STEM lab an undergraduate is transformed from a student into an individual ready for the work of science or business.
- An increase in STEM faculty will increase the numbers of students who can be mentored in research and other transformative parts of undergraduate education. An increase in STEM laboratory facilities and related infrastructure will create the space for students to conduct their experiments and learn to apply the knowledge that they gain from lectures and textbooks.
- These are increases in capacity that are greatly needed because current numbers and current facilities cannot satisfy every student in a STEM field who wants lab or research experience.

Third, as a citizen of Connecticut I want a plan for reinvigorating the State's economy and ensuring that the things that I value and love about the State will continue to be available to me, my family, my community, and future generations.

- I was born in Hartford and grew up on a dairy farm in Lebanon. For over 30 years I lived, studied, and worked outside Connecticut.
- I came home nine years ago because I wanted to contribute to improving the educational opportunities for my young niece and nephew, other members of my family, and their peers. I want my young kin to have the opportunities that I did for a great education and a diverse, challenging, and rewarding work life, and I'd like them to find these opportunities in Connecticut. I also want all of us who are citizens of Connecticut to have the prospect of a State economy that can support strong communities, infrastructure, and public services.
- None of these opportunities and conditions can be sustained unless we create the conditions for our economy to thrive, our businesses to flourish, and our education providers to promote relevant learning, creativity, innovation, and enterprise.

I truly hope that each and every member of the General Assembly's Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding will support, as I do, the Governor's Next Generation CT proposal.

Sincerely,

Margaret A. Lamb, Ph.D.
 Senior Associate Director, Honors Program, and
 Director, Office of Undergraduate Research
 The University of Connecticut

Cc

State Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr., President Pro Tempore of the State Senate Legislative Office Building,
 Room 3300, Hartford, CT 06106-1591

State Representative Gregg Haddad, Legislative Office Building, Room 4115, Hartford, CT 06106-1591