

Appropriations Committee Testimony

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University of Connecticut

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Introduction

Greetings to the Committee and all the dedicated people who are present this evening.

I am Professor Diana Rios, a senior faculty member at UConn Storrs. I'm jointly appointed to the department of Communication and El Instituto.

I'm also president of the American Association of University Professors at UConn (but not the Health Center).

I'm here today to express my concerns about the proposed budget that was released recently. I do not envy the job of all the decision-makers who need to balance budgets and fix the state deficit. You are doing the best you can.

My UConn, My Connecticut

Let me tell you a bit about myself. I came to Connecticut in the late 1990s from the sunny southwestern United States. I drove half way across the country to UConn in a 4 cylinder stick shift, in order to make this beautiful state my new home.

I have been a dedicated teacher, scholar, leader and community-engager at the University of Connecticut for many years.

I admire the great things the state of Connecticut has accomplished and I want to see Connecticut continue being the great gem that it is.

As a faculty member I believe in UConn and its incredible future.

Faculty and many others have invested an incredible amount of professional and personal time, energy and intellectual motivation to continue our forward momentum.

We need to keep our forward momentum going in a world that is increasingly more competitive. Let's stay competitive!

- The proposed cuts in state appropriations to UConn would be profound and debilitating to the state's flagship university, a Research-1 university. UConn is where I mentor, teach, supervise undergraduate and graduate students with great care—and I work with these undergraduates, graduate students, and even UConn alumni as supporting collaborators and co-authors on research papers for conferences and publications. The mentoring and research collaborations are part of what advances critical thinking skills for students and advances knowledge across academic disciplines—all with the "Connecticut" name on it.

- I'm a social scientist by training and I'm mentoring STEM freshman and some business-oriented students, most of who are from underrepresented populations.

These high performing students who are in my First Year Experience learning community called *La Comunidad Intelectual*, and all my students, are more to me than names on an attendance sheet. They have hungry minds, they are vibrant, they are full of promise, and they are the talented professionals of our future in the state and beyond.

- In past years, UConn has gained needed funding and sustained budget cuts. With adequate funding of programs, faculty have been partners in recruiting top students from the state of Connecticut. Our world is large and students have choices in our region and nation. Top students are making choices to study with committed teachers and scholars in their home state, where these top students can stay in close touch with their families and loved ones.

- From a faculty point of view, we are at the forefront of teaching and training and preparing new waves of highly capable professionals. These Huskies, with undergraduate and graduate degrees, go into the state, regional, national and global workforces with sophisticated talents and abilities. UConn graduates, the students we teach, carry forward a legacy of excellence into their future lives and workplaces.

- In past years, UConn faculty have been visionary partners in recruiting new generations of cutting edge faculty who join us in Connecticut in order to move the teaching, research, service missions forward. UConn needs to continue to attract top talented faculty and to retain them.

Continue investing in the state flag-ship University

- It is essential to adequately fund the University of Connecticut, the flagship of the state in order to maintain a forward momentum of top teaching, top students and top research. A continued investment in UConn is an investment toward continued teaching, research and professional excellence in social sciences, sciences, technology, engineering, math, humanities, business and more.

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[[[[Please submit 30 copies of written testimony at the time of sign-up, but not later than 2:00 P.M. Testimony received after the designated time may not be distributed until after the hearing. Please email written testimony in Word or PDF format to APPtestimony@cga.ct.gov.]]]]