

Mark A. Boyer, legislative testimony, 2/24/2015

Good evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I am Mark Boyer, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and director of the Environmental Studies Program at UConn. I hold my primary appointment in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences with a joint appointment in the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources and have been at UConn since 1988.

I want to thank you for hearing me today. Given the length of time I've been at UConn, I've seen our University transformed from a sleepy regional school to one with a very positive global profile. And that transformation was only possible through the strong, forward-looking support of our state legislature.

As a past and current program leader, I fully understand the challenges you face in reducing the state's budget deficit. But, the recommended budget creates a challenge for UConn that cannot be overcome without reducing the \$40 million UConn budget gap.

Frankly, a reduction to the state appropriation in that amount will set UConn back many years and dramatically impact what we do as teachers and researchers.

- It would reduce our ability to teach and challenge the brightest minds that attend UConn. As an Honors advisor, I work with many of these students and know that that they could've gone to any school in the country. But they chose UConn! For its programs, its faculty, its courses, and so much more. The proposed budget will make UConn much less attractive to these students and they will make other college choices in the years ahead.
- As someone who regularly integrates students into my research programs – as another form of teaching—the proposed budget would make it more difficult to attract capable students to my projects and shrink the number of projects that I can engage in with students at all levels.
- For instance, I have three undergraduate Honors students who will pursue their thesis research next year. All three are planning to work with me on examining and developing climate adaptation plans for municipalities around the state. But decreased state funding will make such a project much more difficult. Less money for student mileage to work with town planners; less money to fund their time this summer to work on thesis preliminaries; and fewer opportunities like this in coming years for other stellar students.

I could list many more specific impacts on our ability to deliver quality academic programs, but I'll close with one perceptual point. One of the reasons that I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as a UConn professor has

been the fact that the state's investment since 1995 has made UConn a place admired by academics around the world. Our transformation has been one of kind, matched by none over the same twenty-year period. The proposed budget will set us back and it will be noticed that we have changed course. Please don't take us back to 1995.

Thanks so very much for your time and your careful consideration of the host of demands on your agenda. We all truly appreciate the difficult position in which everyone finds themselves today. Thank you.