

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I am Pat Lenehan, a senior Honors student in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, majoring in Molecular and Cell Biology. Thank you for reading my testimony and for your support of our great university. I understand the financial challenges that are at hand but would like to take this time reflect on my experiences at UConn that may not have been possible with the proposed revised budget.

I came to UConn four years ago as an incoming member of the Combined Program in Medicine, eager to begin the next phase of my education and ever grateful to UConn for securing me a spot in the School of Medicine's Class of 2019. At the time, UConn seemed like a sort of stepping stone for me as I climbed toward my ultimate goal of practicing medicine. Since then, it has become much more.

As a freshman, I came to consider myself the luckiest man on earth, or at least on campus, when I made the basketball team as a practice player. As a sophomore my status was elevated to traveling practice player, and as a junior one step higher to official walk-on. For my senior season, I was fortunate enough to be awarded a full athletic scholarship. The road has been a long one and certainly not always an easy one, but as I look back today, I can't help but still consider myself the luckiest man on campus. Only now it is not because I am playing basketball everyday in storied Gampel Pavilion or the highest quality practice facility in college basketball. Rather, it is because of the lessons that I have learned as a student-athlete within this great program.

Coach Ollie is one of the strongest and most passionate leaders that I have been around in all of my experiences with athletics. A man who practices what he preaches, he has taught me the value of maintaining a tireless work ethic through thick and thin. I have come to strive for excellence, and I have learned that this can only be achieved by embracing and enjoying the process of work that invariably precedes it. Importantly, these attitudes are not only evident when I am on the basketball court. They have also pervaded the work that I have done in courses and labs as a student and as a researcher at UConn.

UConn has offered me more opportunities in academics than I could have possibly imagined. As a freshman, I began working in a Polymer Chemistry lab under a professor who taught me general chemistry. Soon enough, I found that those lessons from basketball were actually quite useful here too. I remember staying in lab late to perform experiments and staying up until 5 A.M. to analyze experimental results – and sometimes being frustrated doing so. What I realized, however, was that if I wanted to be successful in this lab, I had to be willing to work harder than I thought I could in order to reach my goals. Ultimately, my work was published in a scientific journal and I acquired two outstanding faculty mentors who have been close advisors to me as I look toward my graduate education.

This past November, I lived a dream that turned quickly into a nightmare. During the week before Thanksgiving break, I was in Puerto Rico with the basketball team for a tournament. I flew back to New York before the rest of the team – on a flight paid for by the university through the Office of National Scholarships – for my Rhodes Scholarship Interview. On Friday, I met the other candidates at the most formal “informal” dinner I have ever attended; and on Saturday, I interviewed with eight past Rhodes Scholars for arguably the most prestigious scholarship in the world. At 5:30 PM that day, I found out

that the committee had not selected me for the scholarship. Disappointed, I returned to my hotel – also paid for by the university – to get ready to return to Puerto Rico for our final tournament game. I called my mom to tell her that I was officially not a Rhodes Scholar and then heard the news. That day, my aunt had passed away from cholangiocarcinoma. A day that we knew was coming but hoped and prayed we could avoid. A few days later at her wake, my brother gave me the simplest directions you could ask for when he said “Fix it.”

One of my biggest regrets is that I could do nothing to “fix it” for my aunt, but this is what I plan to do in the future, and this is what UConn has prepared me to do. My coursework, research, and experiences with basketball have distinguished me as a strong candidate to medical schools, and next year I have the choice of beginning my MD/PhD training at institutions including UConn, Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and Duke. I have spoken with renowned researchers at each of these institutions about my desire to pursue a career in researching cancer therapies and clinically treating cancer patients, and I am eager to enter this path in the coming months. I know that simply being admitted to any institution means nothing, but my experiences here at UConn have certainly taught me to seize opportunities like this one. The final destination of excellence may not be in sight yet, but at least my time at UConn has shown me the way to get there.

For four years, this university has truly given me anything and everything, and it would not be possible without your great generosity. I feel that the resources made available to me have allowed me to grow not only as a student and an athlete, but most importantly as a person. I know what I want to do in my life, and I am confident that I will succeed because of my UConn foundation. Today UConn has become a world-class institution with virtually limitless opportunities for its members, and I truly think that we must protect this environment that will continue to educate eager minds, attract distinguished faculty, and produce great discoveries.