

Paul Dasilva  
Student – University of Connecticut  
Hometown: New Fairfield, CT

Dear Members of the Committee,

As a junior political science and economics major at the University of Connecticut, and a member of the honors program who has made the Dean's List, I can unequivocally assert that I have had a thoroughly positive academic experience here thus far.

I'm sure I don't have to remind you all of the tremendous progress the state's flagship university has made over the course of the last decade. Our ranking of 19<sup>th</sup>, according to The U.S. News and World Report, among public universities nationwide, is a testament to this progress, and has certainly engendered a surge in high school students applying to UConn.

If you aspire to continue elevating UConn as a prestigious public university, and to make it competitive with schools like the University of Michigan and the University of Virginia, this proposed cut in the operating budget is not conducive to these ends. It is profoundly difficult for an institution seeking to enhance its academic programs and hire the nation's leading scholars if it lacks the requisite funding.

The \$31 million cut is detrimental to my university, and something that I no doubt will personally feel: since my freshman year, I have had the privilege of being taught by professors who came to campus from Harvard, Yale, and other fine institutions. My political science professor from last semester, for instance, was the founding dean of the Prince al-Hussein School of International Studies in Jordan. He informed me about an ambition to improve the Judaic Studies and Islamic studies programs. This project is just one example: professors here value the importance of research, but will find themselves severely constrained under a budget cut of the magnitude proposed.

To help avoid some of the ramifications of a cut to the operating budget, the university's board of trustees has proposed a 31 percent tuition hike for in-state students. I can tell you that while that might sound like the only recourse in theory, it will have a direct and acute effect among high school juniors and seniors in their college search process. One of the main motivating reasons that I elected to come here instead of colleges like the University of Delaware or SUNY, or even private schools like Fordham and George Washington University, the latter of which offered a generous scholarship, was because of a cost-benefit analysis: UConn was a great school, and if I could come here for several thousand dollars less, it was the sure bet and easy choice. My brother is currently a junior whose pride in his brother's school is such that his list for colleges consists of UConn and a huge gap before his next choice. But, paying 31 percent more than I do now (my parents and I have, already, by the way, taken out tens of thousands of dollars in student loans for me) might be enough to rethink an ultimate selection of UConn.

As someone who identifies as a fiscal conservative, I understand the need for the state to get its budget under control; continuously high yearly deficits are unacceptable. But to put the burden of balancing the state budget on the backs of students who will finish school with unthinkable debt already, is simply not fair. As the people who, upon our graduation, will pay in the future to help the state of Connecticut, saddling us with more debt now should not be on

the table. And cutting the school budget when it is trying to compete with great national institutions is equally imprudent. Thank you for your time and consideration.