



PA 19-154—sSB 1130

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS INITIATIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT AND PRIORITY FOR GRANTS-IN-AID FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUMMARY: This act makes various changes related to entrepreneurship and economic development at the University of Connecticut (UConn). It does the following, among other things:

1. modifies UConn's existing faculty recruitment program and requires the UConn Board of Trustees (BoT) to develop a new recruitment plan (§ 1);
2. requires UConn's president and BoT to build and foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at UConn and build relationships with other higher education institutions (§ 2);
3. requires UConn's president, starting October 1, 2019, to spearhead efforts to promote UConn's entrepreneurship and innovation to prospective students and faculty in ways the president deems appropriate (§ 2);
4. requires the BoT to freely license, and release for open, public use, all patents it holds that have not been used for commercialization or licensed for at least 10 years, if the inventor is first offered the right to license the patent (§ 2);
5. requires the UConn president to oversee the development of a plan regarding technology transfer policies and entrepreneurship and innovation at UConn (§ 3); and
6. modifies how CTNext's Higher Education Entrepreneurship Advisory Committee (see BACKGROUND) must prioritize grant applications (§ 4).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

§ 1 — FACULTY RECRUITMENT

Current Faculty Recruitment Program Changes

By law, the BoT must develop a program to recruit eminent faculty and their research staff to UConn. The act requires BoT to continuously maintain and revise this program from time to time.

The law requires the program to support the state's economic development, but the act requires the program to do this through faculty research. It also requires the program to promote the core sectors of Connecticut's economy, instead of core competency areas as prior law required. By law, unchanged by the act, the program must do so by accelerating the pace of applied research development.

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By law, the recruitment program must supplement faculty compensation and related personnel and materials costs in order to secure the faculty for UConn. Prior law limited eligibility for this supplemental funding to scientists with demonstrated excellence in their research field and an interest in commercializing their research. The act expands eligibility to include individuals in fields other than science but requires that they have an interest in working collaboratively on (1) research that meets societal needs or (2) commercialization of discoveries, innovations, or technologies.

The act also eliminates a provision requiring UConn's president, before spending program funds, to certify to the Office of Policy and Management secretary that UConn or its foundation received at least \$2 million in written financial support commitments for faculty recruitment from industry or other sources.

New Faculty Recruitment Plan

Starting by April 1, 2020, the act requires the BoT to biennially develop a plan for recruiting and hiring research faculty, including those whose research is focused on societal needs or can be commercialized. The plan must (1) outline the operating and capital costs associated with the plan and (2) include recruitment and hiring goals. The UConn president must annually report on the university's progress in meeting the hiring goals to the Higher Education and Finance, Revenue and Bonding committees.

§ 2 — ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The act requires UConn's president and BoT to build and foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among enrolled students at each UConn campus. They must do so through a series of activities, including (1) organizing and hosting regular networking events for student and faculty entrepreneurs and (2) supporting relevant student clubs and organizations.

The BoT and president must also seek to build entrepreneurial relationships, when feasible and practical, between UConn and other interested public or independent higher education institutions in Connecticut, including Yale University.

§ 3 — TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PLAN

The act requires the UConn president to oversee the (1) benchmarking and review of technology transfer policies at other leading higher education institutions and (2) development of a plan regarding technology transfer policies. In developing the plan, the UConn president must solicit input from the CTNext board of directors and the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Advisory Committee during at least one of each entity's meetings.

Plan Development

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To reform UConn's technology transfer policies, the plan must include recommendations for the following:

1. maximizing the number of new business ventures formed through commercializing student and faculty research, giving greater priority to such business ventures' financial interests than to UConn's recoupment of patent-related or other royalties or profit;
2. focusing the university's technology transfer policies on start-up business formation rather than patent licensing;
3. funding, staffing levels, and staff organization needed to implement the plan; and
4. any other recommendations requested by the BoT.

The plan must also include recommendations, goals, and funding needed to foster faculty and student entrepreneurship at UConn and to create an alumni mentor network to assist student entrepreneurs and faculty in forming business ventures. These recommendations must include best practices for alumni mentor networks that must be shared with CTNext or the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Advisory Committee.

The plan must also include the following:

1. recommendations for (a) continuously improving UConn's technology transfer policies, taking into consideration entrepreneurship best practices and (b) actionable measures to increase the creation and support of new business ventures;
2. recommended changes, if any, to the recruitment and hiring plan and goals established under the act;
3. consideration of all funds available to UConn and legislative recommendations, if any, for changing the university's funding levels;
4. development of a comprehensive plan of metrics for tracking and analyzing the university's success in facilitating the creation of new business ventures based on faculty and student research;
5. an analysis of comparative rankings made by qualified experts of U.S. higher education institutions regarding the institutions' success in entrepreneurship and innovation, including a ranking of UConn and the ranking or a range of rankings UConn must seek to attain;
6. an assessment of current and future space needed on UConn's campuses to serve as gathering places for student entrepreneurs and other individuals who support student business venture development, including any projected construction or renovation costs; and
7. recommendations for ways UConn can help other higher education institutions in the state foster entrepreneurship and innovation.

Plan Submission

UConn's president must submit the plan to the UConn BoT by January 1, 2020, and the board must either approve the plan or request changes to it by March 1, 2020. If the board requests changes, the president has 30 days after the

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request to submit a revised plan to the board. Once the board approves the final plan, it must submit the plan to the Higher Education and Finance, Revenue and Bonding committees and the CTNext board. Each committee must raise a bill during the 2020 or 2021 legislative session to implement the plan's recommendations. The CTNext board may adopt a resolution to implement the plan's recommendations for UConn.

§ 4 — CTNEXT'S HIGHER EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The law charges CTNext's Higher Education Entrepreneurship Advisory Committee with reviewing applications and awarding grants to institutions whose grant applications are consistent with, and further, the committee's master plan for entrepreneurship at public and private higher education institutions.

Under existing law, the committee must prioritize applications that include collaborative initiatives between higher education institutions. Under the act, it must additionally prioritize applications that support individual higher education institutions in developing alumni mentor networks, entrepreneurs-in-residence programs, university proof of concept funds, and student business start-up accelerators. The advisory committee must do so when the individual institution demonstrates that the networks, programs, funds, and accelerators are not feasible for operation across multiple institutions.

BACKGROUND

CTNext

CTNext is a subsidiary of Connecticut Innovations, Inc. Its major purpose is to assist entrepreneurs and startup and growth-stage businesses by, among other things, (1) building entrepreneur communities, (2) serving as a catalyst to protect and enhance the state's innovation ecosystem, (3) connecting entrepreneurs and growth-stage businesses to government and private resources, (4) facilitating mentoring for entrepreneurs and young business ventures, and (5) facilitating innovation and entrepreneurship at higher education institutions (CGS § 32-39f).