

# Legislative Program Review and Investigation Committee

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## SCOPE OF STUDY

### University of Connecticut's Affordability to Students

#### Focus

This study will examine how the affordability of a University of Connecticut (UConn) undergraduate education has changed over the last 20 years, with particular attention to in-state students. It will identify the university's revenue and expenditure factors that influence the overall cost of attendance. The study will also analyze the impact of financial aid programs on affordability. Where possible, affordability and cost comparisons will be made to peer institutions and selected top 10 public universities.

#### Background

The University of Connecticut, the state's flagship institution, has been undertaking initiatives to enlarge the faculty, build the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs, boost undergraduate enrollment, and update as well as expand certain facilities. These efforts – which are intended to reap benefits for UConn, its students, and the state – come at a price. Concerns have been raised about the institution's affordability to students.

In the United States, college affordability is a key aspect of higher education access. Attention to college affordability has been growing as college costs and student loan debt have continued ballooning, while incomes have stagnated. Nationally, average tuition and fees for public four-year higher education institutions grew 27 percent beyond inflation over the last five years.<sup>1</sup> Higher costs are translating into more borrowers, debt, and delinquency. For example, the average student loan balance per borrower climbed about 35 percent, to just under \$25,000, from 2007 through 2012.<sup>2</sup>

At the University of Connecticut, tuition and fees for an in-state undergraduate student increased 9 percent beyond inflation between 2008 and 2011 (four academic years).<sup>3</sup> These costs are planned to continue to rise above the likely rate of inflation, with scheduled tuition boosts of about six percent in each of the next three fiscal years, in addition to a cumulative fee increase of approximately nine percent.

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<sup>1</sup> The College Board, *Annual Survey of Colleges 2012*, Table 2A, NCES, IPEDS. Accessed May 30, 2013 at: <http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-and-fee-and-room-and-board-charges-over-time-1972-73-through-2012-13-selected-years>

<sup>2</sup> Donghoon Lee, "Household Debt and Credit: Student Debt," Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 28, 2013. Accessed May 30, 2013 at: <http://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/mediaadvisory/2013/Lee022813.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> PRI staff analysis of federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems information (published tuition and fees for full-time, first-year student at the Storrs campus). Adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index.

## Areas of Analysis

1. Define what college affordability means and provide an overview of national trends in higher education affordability.
2. Explore trends in UConn's overall expenditures (e.g., faculty, facilities, administrative personnel) and revenues (e.g., state appropriations, tuition, fees, board charges), as well as other factors (e.g., time to degree completion, university expansion initiatives) that appear to impact students' costs.
3. Examine UConn's historical undergraduate admission policies and enrollment patterns for in-state and out-of-state students; determine how the profile of incoming first-year students has changed academically, demographically, and financially; and explore the impact these changes may have had on affordability.
4. Assess the impact of financial aid policies and programs in relation to measures of affordability, including analysis of: student aid packages (eligibility, offerings, and acceptances); unmet financial need; cost of attendance after aid (i.e., net price); student and graduate indebtedness; and pre- and post-enrollment programs that may defray costs for students and graduates.
5. Compare UConn's cost of attendance, affordability, and key revenues and expenditures to peer institutions and select top 10 public universities.

## Areas Not Under Review

The study will not examine, in a comprehensive manner, the affordability of Connecticut's other public higher education institutions.

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