

An Open Letter to the University of Connecticut Administration

Authored by members of the faculty, circulated by UConn-AAUP for signatures, and presented on behalf of the undersigned.

Dear President Maric, Provost D'alleva, and Members of the Board of Trustees,

We, the undersigned faculty, write to express our serious concerns about the budget cuts proposed by the university administration. While we understand the complexities of financial decision-making, these cuts, as currently proposed, will dramatically degrade UConn's central mission of teaching and research excellence, and its standing as a world-class institution of higher education.

As encapsulated by the [UConn mission statement](#), a university's greatness is a function first and foremost of its commitment to teaching and research. Accordingly, these cornerstones should be safeguarded to the utmost and should be the last to suffer the adverse effects of difficult times.

Over the last decade, even as enrollment and tuition rates at UConn have been steadily increasing, academic departments have faced regular budget reductions. This has left departments unable to absorb additional cuts while maintaining their commitments to their core missions. And yet, the [budget cuts that are being proposed for the next five years](#) go even further. To meet the magnitude of these cuts, many departments across the university have no options available other than to eliminate key instructor positions, and dismantle vital forms of educational support. This will have immediate and devastating consequences.

- Class sizes will increase dramatically, with many having to move to large lectures with 200+ students per course. Furthermore, because of the limited number of classrooms able to accommodate such class sizes, many more courses will be forced into an online format.
- In-person contact between students and faculty will be significantly reduced.
- Discussion sections, labs, undergraduate research programs, and the honors program will have to be scaled back dramatically.
- Entire graduate programs may need to be severely reduced or even eliminated.
- As a result of the disastrous reduction in the quality of, and access to, education for our students, 4-year and 6-year graduation rates will plummet, increasing the financial burden on students.
- Department workloads will increase to levels unmatched by peer or aspirant institutions. We can expect a massive brain drain as many faculty leave for more favorable positions elsewhere.
- Combined with the lack of graduate students and other researchers, the above will lead to a sharp decline in UConn's research output and, in turn, support from state and federal funding agencies (NSF, NIH, etc.).

These repercussions are nothing short of catastrophic. If implemented, they will have an unprecedented impact on UConn as a whole, undoing all the efforts over the past two decades that have led to it becoming one of the nation's top public universities and an esteemed R1 research institution.

We are troubled by the lack of communication about these severe budget cuts, and the administration's reliance on department heads to be the bearers of this shocking news. Strategic decisions of this scope are made at the highest levels, and the community deserves to hear about it from the source. Instead, the communications we have received from the administration in recent months include [praise for UConn's fiscal management](#), proposals for [program and campus expansions](#), and the promotion of an [ambitious and wide-ranging 10-year strategic vision](#), all of which at best ignore, and at worst contradict, the reality on the ground.

With this letter, we call for greater clarity, transparency, and accountability from the administration about this crisis. As specific, actionable steps towards this goal, we request the following.

- A clear account of the budgetary decisions from the last several years, and an explanation of how we have arrived at this critical point.
- A detailed explanation of the university's prioritization of expenses moving forward, and an itemized list of impacts on university units other than academic departments, including student services, athletics programs, and the administration itself.
- How projected expenditures for the next five years will serve the university's core mission—of teaching and research excellence—above all else, thereby ensuring UConn's ability to maintain its status as a world-class university.
- Updates on what other (if any) plans are in motion to avoid the worst case scenario posed by this crisis, and an update on negotiations with the Governor and State Legislature on UConn's budget and future.

We welcome an open dialogue to address these questions and concerns, preferably in the form of a town hall. The challenges ahead will impact students, faculty, staff, and all members of the UConn community. We hope for a solution that will preserve UConn as a great university.

Sincerely,

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