

Testimony of Anne Reisch UConn School of Medicine – Class of 2023

Appropriations Committee 2/18/2020 Public Hearing

Re: UConn Health Budget

My name is Anne Reisch, and I am a resident of Farmington, CT, and a first-year medical student at the University of Connecticut, School of Medicine. Thank you for your past support of our school and for allowing me to write about my experiences.

Before July 2019, I was a Rhode Island resident. Applying to medical school was daunting, knowing that my home state lacks a public medical school, and private institutions come with an enormous price tag. As someone interested in primary care, I knew that taking out massive loans would make it difficult to pursue my desire to care for the underserved. Fortunately, I was accepted by UCONN, which not only has a reduced price for Rhode Islanders but also offers in-state after the first year. This financial relief has given me the peace of mind to explore all my interests and continue on the path of primary care.

In terms of curriculum, UCONN's is truly unique. I interviewed at other medical schools, and none were comparable. UCONN employs an integrated, team-based curriculum that prepares students to be physicians, who know how to effectively work in inter-professional team settings, improving patient outcomes and quality measures. Furthermore, the curriculum is similar to a flipped-classroom. Students prepare materials prior to coming to class and use the instructional time to apply the knowledge to cases. This fosters critical thinking and independence; physicians are required to continue learning and utilizing resources independently throughout their entire careers to improve their practice, and UCONN is giving us the skills to do just that.

Beyond the basic science curriculum, UCONN puts extreme emphasis on shaping doctors who see the patient beyond the exam room. UCONN does this through many courses, including CLiC, PACTS, and DoCC. CLiC is a clinical longitudinal immersion course, where students are assigned to a primary care preceptor in their first month at school and go weekly for three years. There, students practice their clinical skills, including bedside manners, discussing sensitive topics, determining differential diagnoses, counseling, and more. I am amazed at just how much I have learned in a few months at my clinical site, and I know that I will excel in my clinical years and beyond because of it. Another course is PACTS, a patient advocacy course in which students explore the patient's perspective to improve their understanding of the patient as a whole and improve the care they provide. For example, I recently went to the dialysis clinic. There, I spoke with patients about the challenges of dialysis, and what they would like to see their physicians do better. Finally, the course DoCC is our clinical skills course. Here, students practice talking to patients about their past medical histories, practice exam maneuvers, and are tested often to ensure they are meeting their skills benchmarks. These courses are shaping kind, compassionate, and skilled physicians!

UCONN also emphasizes public health. They recognize the importance of physicians who have ample knowledge of population health, community health, and public health that extends beyond traditional medicine. In this course, we talk about topics such as vaccines, social determinants of health, vaping, violence, and more. These are concepts that our patients struggle with beyond the doctor's office, but have a direct and significant impact on their health. I am the curriculum student chair for this course and have a lot of experience with the faculty. It is exceptional how dedicated the faculty is to this course,

and how open they are to feedback, and shaping the course to incorporate topics that students are interested in. For example, the UCONN Against Gun Violence Interest Group wanted to see the topic of gun violence in medicine be discussed. The curriculum faculty listened and made it happen. We now have a week where we discuss gun violence, and how physicians can counsel their patients on safe gun storage, risk factors, and ultimately prevent injuries/death. The public health curriculum gives students 12 credits in public health and requires students to do a capstone project that demonstrates how physicians can work to improve public health.

The last aspect of UCONN I would like to mention is a unique program that I am lucky to be a part of called the Urban Service Tract/AHEC. Through this program, I am learning about underserved populations, such as veterans, the homeless, and immigrants. We have learning retreats where we learn specific clinical skills, listen to speakers, and learn about resources in the community that physicians can access to help these vulnerable populations beyond just providing medical care, such as social service agencies and housing agencies. I know that this program is going to make me a physician with a unique toolbox to help my patients. This program also strongly emphasizes community service in Connecticut, which allows students to interact with the urban community, and the patients they will one day serve. Events include hosting the Christmas Party at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Biomedical Fairs with high school students, senior citizen health fairs, and more.

Medical School is not easy, but UCONN makes it a challenge I am *happy* to be conquering. They place extreme emphasis on student wellness and education, ensuring we are going to be physicians who love what they do. I am so fortunate to be fulfilling my dream of becoming a doctor at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, and I hope this testimony made clear why. Further funding will continue to give students the incredible chance to accomplish their goals and will educate many physicians who will choose to remain in the state, and serve the future populations, improving the health of Connecticut. Thank you.