

Thank you to the members of the Appropriations Committee for this opportunity to testify in support of UConn's budget. My name is Berk Alpay and I'd like to briefly describe to you my experience as a Computer Science and Mathematics student at UConn over the last three years. I hope my experiences will reflect the close ties between high-quality education, academic research, and industry that are possible because of UConn.

Since early my freshman year, I've done research with the Eversource Energy Center at the Innovation Partnership Building at UConn. The research group I'm a part of, a team of students and faculty, works full-time to develop methods by which to improve the reliability of power grids in cooperation with New England's largest energy provider.

Since last year, I've worked on a research project in bioinformatics: using genetic markers to predict gene expression. This work has major applications in detecting genetic risks of disease. My research wouldn't be feasible without the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Derek Aguiar – recently hired by the Department of Computer Science and Engineering – and the advanced computational resources provided by UConn Health.

Outside of the lab, my computer science and statistics coursework are designed explicitly to give students a deep understanding of software engineering, data science, and machine learning – skills for which today's industry has high demand. Almost all of my instructors are actively engaged in research, and impart insights into course material and hands-on projects that come with working at the bleeding edge of science and math.

UConn's budget supports the quality of education, academic research capacity, and industry partnerships that make all this possible. I chose UConn for its status as an affordable, world-class university, and I've never doubted that it was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit testimony. I hope you will continue to recognize and support UConn's critical role in Connecticut's economy.