

Good evening,

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Connecticut House Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to speak tonight on behalf of the University of Connecticut.

My name is Erin Curry and I am currently a sixth year graduate student pursuing my PhD in Applied and Condensed Matter Physics at the UConn Storrs campus and the Vice President of Graduate Student Senate. I grew up in Glastonbury, and although I achieved my Bachelors degree out of state, returning to Connecticut for graduate school was very important to me. When deciding on a physics graduate program I chose UConn for two reasons. First, I wanted to come back to the great state that I call home with the hopes it would open doors to industrial career opportunities in CT post-graduation. Second, the research, innovative laboratory equipment, and awarded faculty at UConn stood out noticeably against other highly regarded programs to which I was offered admission. The institutional esteem that attracted me to the University of Connecticut has only grown during my time as a student researcher. Most notably, with the financial support of the State of Connecticut, UConn has the incredible opportunity to expand STEM research and innovation through the Next Generation Connecticut Initiative also known as NEXTGENCT. A large component of the NEXTGENCT accomplishment thus far is infrastructure catering to a wide range of STEM departments, notably the creation of the University Tech Park, which includes the Innovation Partnership Building. This revolutionary building brings industrial leaders together with motivated students and faculty to create cutting edge research and development.

To use a personal example, I am a graduate student who has already benefited from the unique resources of the Innovation Partnership Building. I am funded through a joint UConn-United Technologies grant to solve fundamental questions surrounding the relatively new field of metal additive manufacturing. Thanks to the NEXTGENCT initiative, UConn has given me a unique opportunity to utilize multiple additive industrial systems and recently in partnership with industry have even begun the process of possible patent and commercializing of our radiation imaging technique. I have seen first hand that the NEXTGEN's investment in UConn and its students is working to create revolutionary collaboration which will only strengthen our workforce for the future.

The benefits of NEXGENCT are already exemplified in completed projects such as the Innovation Partnership Building and one third of Gant Science Complex, but in order for this mission to reach its full potential we must not stop here. In plan are renovations to extremely outdated buildings

such as and Torrey Life Sciences and the creation of the Science One complex. We must see that the plans follow through to encourage the best and brightest to choose UConn.

In addition to infrastructure, an arguably more important element of the upcoming years at UConn is the necessary hiring of faculty and staff to support the NEXTGEN mission. Throughout my time at UConn I have witnessed many years of hiring freezes at the University, causing a profound ripple effect through teaching, research, and advancement. Accomplished new professors, increase the caliber of undergraduate teaching, bring in grant funding to the university, and help to recruit the top graduate students to UConn. Speaking as a graduate student, talented faculty is a major contributor when choosing a higher education program. Continuing the NEXTGEN initiative will allow the university to hire new faculty, bring in the most talented graduate students, and educate undergraduates to create the best future workforce in CT.

UConn has established the foundation to become a leader in teaching, research and development; however, if we do not continue to support the initiative, we will be left with nothing but the foundation. To build a strong academic future for both the university and Connecticut as a whole we must follow through on the next years of NEXTGEN and beyond. Thank you for your time.