

WORKING FOR A BETTER UCONN

UCONN Graduate Employee Union
United Auto Workers, Local 6950
1734 Storrs Rd. Storrs, CT 06268



February 18, 2020

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives DiMassa and Horn, and members of the Appropriations Committee;

My name is Jordan McMillan, and I am the president of the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW Local 6950) and a PhD candidate in Sociology at UCONN. In my time at the University, I have taught vital general education and upper level courses and worked as an RA for a timely gun violence prevention research project. I am writing to testify on the Budget Hearing for Higher Education.

Support for UConn is an investment to develop a highly skilled workforce for the state. In my teaching work with undergraduate students, I prepare them to integrate real world experience with their education and foster skills such as critical thinking. As a graduate student studying Sociology, my UConn graduate degree will prepare me to evaluate the need for and efficacy of social policy within the state of Connecticut.

Support for UConn also allows us to maintain a reputation as a competitive and strong university, ensuring that we can recruit and retain dedicated and skilled faculty and staff. I chose UConn over other universities for my graduate program because of the reputation of the sociology department and its faculty. Attracting faculty, staff and students to UConn also directly stimulates Connecticut's economy, providing jobs and driving innovation and entrepreneurship in the state. I moved to Connecticut in 2013 to attend UConn. Since that time, I have established permanent residence in the state. My wife now provides crucial health services in New Haven, and my child attends public school in the state. My story is not unique—supporting UConn and all state universities brings in and trains a talented workforce that will sustain Connecticut for the coming generation.

Support for UConn allows us to continue to provide access to affordable and high-quality education for 20,000 undergraduates, supported in large part by graduate assistants like myself. Nearly 1400 Teaching Assistants are lead instructors for hundreds of courses and discussion and lab sections that provide the critical face-to-face interaction for 20,000 undergraduates who receive a quality, affordable education each year. As someone who teaches 40 to 60 students per semester, it will be difficult to maintain the quality of education at UConn without continued investment.

Though most of the funding for research comes from external grants, state funding is crucial to supporting the innovative research that makes UConn great. Maintaining investment in the facilities and top notch faculty enables high-caliber research that bolsters the state economy.

UConn—and the state university system it is a part of—is a vital asset to the State of Connecticut. In the past, the state budget has provided generous support to UConn’s important mission of providing education, service, and research to the state and residents of Connecticut, and I strongly encourage you to continue this generosity.

Sincerely,

Jordan McMillan

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