

Good evening,

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

My name is JD Tamucci and I am currently pursuing my Masters in Structural Biology at the UConn - Storrs Campus. Growing up, I split my time between my parents' houses in Wilton and Norwalk, CT. After high school, I elected to bring my Air Force ROTC scholarship to UConn because of the strong reputation of UConn's officer training program. Four years later, I was unexpectedly medically disqualified from military service, so I decided to pursue a different form of service through research and computational drug design for rare diseases.

Instrumental in our lab's research, and that of many other labs, has been financial support from the State of Connecticut which has helped to maintain and expand the computational and experimental resources available to students. The value immediate access to these state-of-the-art, on-campus facilities imbues on academic research cannot be overstated. For instance, the recent expansion of the Storrs High Performance Computing facility instantaneously broadened the breadth, depth, and pace with which my fellow lab members and I could address important research questions to the point that we had 9 publications in the the last two years. And this arose simply because we don't have to deal with the financial cost and time-delay of outsourcing work to other schools. We could do everything we need from right in Storrs. The state's financing of STEM research and development is as such directly correlated to this one example of a research success story, and your enduring investment will only enhance our state's growing reputation as a hub for BioScience Innovation.

But just as important as continual advancement in STEM research is continual improvement in the teaching of STEM courses. For 5 semesters I served as the teaching assistant for an introductory biology course of about 700 students. After my first year, I assembled a list of topics that my students were struggling to understand and thought to myself, "Students are capable of learning these topics. We just aren't teaching them correctly." Around the next week, I saw a flier for a fine arts course titled "Animating Science". I reached out to the professors and asked if they'd be interested in collaborating with me to develop instructive animations on those difficult topics from our biology course. They loved the idea. Now, two years later, we've run that course twice and created 15 animations that are actively being used in teaching my course.

What gets me excited, is it's undergrads teaching other undergrads. This is a win-win for both sides. The biology students understand the material better. The arts students expand their portfolio. Further, the ties between departments grow stronger. I bring this up as just one example of the many innovative educational techniques being used at our campus.

Of all the work I've been involved with at UConn, this collaboration is what I'm most proud of, and it's just getting started which would make it an even larger misfortune if cuts in promised state funding forced the departments to stop offering that class.

You have difficult decisions ahead regarding what gets funded, and what doesn't, but I hope that when it comes time to vote you will keep these two success stories in mind about how UConn is not only reaching but surpassing its goals in teaching and research.

Thank you for your time.