

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD

Sen. Catherine Osten
Appropriations Committee
Co-Chairperson

Rep. Toni Walker
Appropriations Committee
Co-Chairperson



Jeffrey Beckham, Secretary
Office of Policy and Management
Co-Chairperson

Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 18, 2024, 1:30 pm

Room 1D and via Zoom

([Link](#) to CT-N Video)

Members in Attendance:

Sen. Osten, Co-Chair
Rep. Walker, Co-Chair
Secretary Beckham, Co-Chair
Rep. Dathan
Sen. Flexer
Sen. Gordon
Rep. Haddad
Rep. Kennedy
Sen. Kelly
Rep. Nuccio
Rep. Paris

Others present:

Radenka Maric, President, UConn
Jeffrey Geoghegan, Chief Financial Officer, UConn and UConn Health
Anne D'Alleva, Provost, UConn
Nathan Fuerst, Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, UConn
Amy Yancey, President and CEO, UConn Foundation

Secretary Beckham called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of September 9 and October 10 meetings. The motion was made by Senator Osten, seconded by Representative Walker. By voice vote, the motion carried.

Secretary Beckham welcomed Radenka Maric, President of the University of Connecticut and her senior staff for their presentation.

In her opening remarks, President Maric stated that the UConn team welcomes the opportunity to work closely with the advisory board to ensure that UConn is effective and successful in carrying out its mission on behalf of its students and the citizens of the state as a land grant university, and as the state's flagship university. She stated the importance of recruiting, educating, and graduating exceptional students, doing whatever possible to ensure student success, knowing that most will go on to live and work in the state. President Maric spoke to the need to continue to build Connecticut as a research powerhouse, with the potential of bringing millions in external funding to the state each year, which fuels groundbreaking vital research that has a positive economic impact on Connecticut and helps the nation and countries around the world addressing challenging problems. Further, she stated that the university needs to do all it can to continue to serve as an economic engine for the state, producing the skilled workforce of the future, and partnering with the private sector to fuel innovation and create jobs to bolster the state's economy.

President Maric then delivered her presentation ([link](#) to presentation).

Senator Osten asked if UConn has a breakout of where international students are coming from if the university foresees any relative to immigration policies with the next presidential administration.

Anne D'Alleva, UConn Provost, stated that among undergraduate students UConn has pipelines to several countries, including China, India, Canada and Mexico. She added that for graduate programs, students come globally for specific programs, so there is very strong representation of students from across Europe and Asia, with India and China being important pipelines for the university. Ms. D'Alleva shared that UConn believes that it is important to be a global university and have global outreach and a global footprint. She acknowledged that there may be challenging larger conversations in the future, but worldwide, students are eager to come to UConn, and the university will continue to work to find places for them and create pathways for them to attend UConn.

Senator Osten then asked for detail regarding the \$5.1 billion in campus infrastructure investments

Jeffrey Geoghegan, UConn CFO, responded that the figure is an overall representation of the growth of the campus since 1995, including UConn 2000, Next Generation UConn and the university's institutional and operating dollars.

Senator Osten asked what type of research is being done with the grants awarded to the university. President Maric responded that they are the federal and industry awards, with the largest portion being federal awards. She shared that the awards come from the National Institute of Health, the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Education, and the Department of Agriculture.

Senator Osten asked President Maric if she foresees any problems with securing research grants from the Trump administration. She shared that she has read reports that some

Trump appointees may change the trajectory of some federal departments, which could affect the number of awards being made to institutions such as UConn.

President Maric responded that the work that UConn does for the Department of Energy, for instance, will not change because the research is needed regardless of the political party in charge.

Representative Haddad asked if there was there a diminishment in the number of international students at the University of Connecticut between 2017 and 2020.

Nathan Furst, Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment responded that there wasn't a diminishment. Mr. Furst added that in 2019 the university did see some contraction begin from China. He explained that international markets for students are ever changing and evolving, and that federal administration policy can influence those changes. He reiterated Provost D'Alleva's point that UConn is always working to identify new markets for international students in order to branch out and diversify, which has been the strategy UConn has undertaken for a number of years.

Representative Haddad followed up Senator Osten's question by asking President Maric to share her perspective on research opportunities moving forward.

President Maric shared that she attended the annual meeting of American Public Land Grant Universities in Orlando that included policymakers and others from Washington, DC to talk about the future of research under the new administration. She said that one thing that they emphasized is that investment in artificial intelligence is going to grow significantly, investment in the natural resources and use of the natural gas in combination with other techniques, and cyber security are going to be priorities. She believes the potential federal changes will result in a balancing act and the university will need to be alert, but not to panic. President Maric stated the UConn has the people who can tackle those issues, be proactive and understand the agenda of the new administration.

Representative Walker remarked that there could be challenges ahead, and that it will be important to "stay the course" to ensure that students get a quality education. She then congratulated President Maric on UConn's efforts to mitigate the impact of budget reductions by protecting 1st generation graduates. She spoke of the amount of time and energy that the university puts in to making sure its students are taken care of have a positive experience by providing the supports they need to succeed.

President Maric responded that university has experienced a record high of 1st generation of the students. She spoke of the responsibility the university feels in providing the supports necessary for student success. She shared that of the 8,800 1st generation students at UConn, more than 70% of them are from Connecticut and they stay in Connecticut after graduation.

Representative Paris asked if there were any fears regarding the wellbeing of undocumented students on the UConn campus, especially for those coming from out of state. He commented on the concerns during President Trump's 1st administration, and the

efforts made to protect students. He asked if President Maric's administration was developing a plan to ensure that undocumented students continue to be protected.

VP Furst stated the UConn has an undocumented student advisory board that includes leadership among faculty, staff and students to identify issues, and that the advisory board's work will accelerate to some degree as the pressure or risk associated with any actions that could impact our students rises. He shared that one of the things that has been worked on is the undocumented student aid application, which allows students to receive aid from the university. VP Furst stated that student services and support for students that are confronting these concerns are of the utmost importance.

Representative Paris requested that any plans developed by UConn be shared with this group. He stated that such plans could be a model for the other institutions of higher education on how to address the issue.

Representative Paris posed a question to President Maric regarding the number of graduates who find employment in the state. President Maric had shared that 76% of graduates from Connecticut take jobs in the state. Rep. Paris asked if there is a breakdown as to how many of those students are Connecticut "born and bred" versus those who are out of State students who come to Connecticut and then stay after graduating from UConn.

VP Furst responded that while he did not have that data at hand, overall, we know that approximately 3/4 of UConn students are from the State of Connecticut, demonstrating that UConn is having success in retaining talented students from Connecticut. President Maric added that about 70% of UConn students are from the state, and 76% of graduates stay in Connecticut. She stated that of the students who come to UConn from out of state, about 6% stay in Connecticut.

Senator Osten remarked that the number of students attending the Neag School of Education went from 880 in 2014 to 841 in 2024. She asked if there was a particular reason in the decrease

Provost D'Alleva replied that while UConn has the capacity to train more teachers, part of the problem is demand for the program. She shared that there are efforts underway to make sure that undergraduate students, and even high school students, when thinking about their options for college are thinking about education and becoming teachers. She stated that the problem is not unique to UConn; rather, there are lower enrollments in teacher training programs nationwide.

With regard to the Foundation/Endowment revenue information presented on Slide 12, Rep. Dathan asked if the figures represented the return on the lump of the foundation and endowment revenues coming.

Mr. Geoghegan responded that the foundation is a separate entity that does the fundraising and that there are a lot of different avenues of the fundraising, including gifts and bequests. He stated that the university does not actually get the cash for years, and the cash will be realized in the out years. He shared that the slide shows the amount of cash that has been transferred from the foundation to the university to spend on operating any given year. He

went on to explain how the variables in dealing with the foundation/endowment funds and how they can be used by the university.

Senator Osten asked for an explanation of the Capital/Debt line, including the \$15 million increase. Mr. Geoghegan gave a detailed explanation of the components of the Capital/Debt line. With regard to the projected increase, he explained that some of it is related to the new dorm on South Campus, while the rest is related to the university's aggressive plan for renewal of the housing and dining stock they have been utilizing. He further stated that the university is at 100% capacity of housing on campus, so they are looking at new ways to refresh housing and new ways to invest in the housing stock, which could result in UConn's ability to increase the number of students. Senator Osten requested information going forward on the plans for the housing and dining stock, including the fees the university charges.

Senator Osten then asked where the revenue from housing was reflected on Slide 12. Mr. Geoghegan replied that the housing revenue is imbedded in the auxiliary line, housing and dining making up the most of Auxiliary Enterprise line item. Senator Osten requested more detail regarding the Auxiliary Enterprise line.

Senator Osten observed that the UConn's foundation is significantly less than some other colleges that she feels do not perform as well as UConn. She asked President Maric to share the university's philosophy relative to its foundation.

President Maric stated that the university is trying to be very aggressive when it comes to fundraising, as evidenced by the recruitment of a new CEO and President who had foundation experience with other private and public colleges. President Maric shared that in the strategic plan the fundraising goal is to achieve \$1.5 billion, with endowment of \$1 billion.

Amy Yancey, President and CEO of the UConn Foundation shared that UConn's fundraising staff is approximately 1/3 the size of many of UConn's public peers. She went on to explain the ways the fundraising and endowment processes work.

Senator Osten asked what the total number of employees is at the foundation. Ms. Yancey responded that the foundation has a total of 160 employees, and that the investment team is roughly 3-1/2 employees. She shared that the majority of investments are made through professional consultants that are among the top in institutional investing, and a board of directors committee that is responsible for overseeing the governance of the investment strategy. She stated that the foundation's programs are aligned with its strategy and largely with peers of UConn's size, as UConn is still relatively small compared to some of its peers that have large endowments. Liquidity, risk is something that we must take into consideration as we make our investment strategies.

Representative Walker asked President Maric about the increase in the student population.

President Maric replied that the university has seen significant growth in Stamford, as well as some growth in Waterbury and Harford. VP Furst added that they have seen growth in transfer students. He shared that UConn is working very hard with the guaranteed

admission program and they now looking at new formats for transfer programs such as block transfer. .

Representative Walker shared conversations she has had with high school students who are interested in starting at the Waterbury campus, then transferring to Storrs. She added that the students remarked on the programs UConn offers that allow students to study in other countries and the appeal of those programs to students who have not been beyond Waterbury.

President Maric shared that Dr. Hoeft, Dean of the Waterbury campus, is dedicated to outreach in the community. Students are apprised of the kind of support they will receive. President Maric added that UConn is working on addressing the disappointment and sense of failure that some students feel about not being accepted to the Storrs campus as freshmen. She shared that the university offers some programming at the regional campuses that is better than the programming at Storrs, and they work to share that information with prospective students. President Maric cited as an example the 14 programs at the Stamford campus that offer 4 year majors.

Representative Haddad comment on the success of the guaranteed acceptance program for community college students and TAP program, which allows for the seamless transfer students from the state universities to UConn. He requested a rundown of the number of students that have taken advantage of the transfer programs over the last decade. Additionally, Representative Haddad asked for a financial overview of the past 10 years.

Representative Haddad then asked how the \$237 million forecast for state support in FY 26 was determined. President Maric responded that it is a calculation based on rolling forward the current balance, as well as including items like the full year effect of collective bargaining agreements. Representative Haddad remarked that while the block grant has remained relatively steady, tuition and mandatory fees have gone up by \$300 million over the years. He said that a 10 year forecast would be very helpful in providing a historical perspective as the future funding needs are determined.

Secretary Beckham spoke of the considerable amount of increased state support for UConn that has been provided in recent years. He then asked about the number of new positions reflected in the Salaries & Wages line and if that number was net new positions. He requested an overview of positions the last 10 years. Additionally, he asked what efforts are being made in controlling the number of positions and the associated costs.

Mr. Geoghegan responded that UConn will provide the detail that Secretary Beckham requested. He confirmed that the number reflects net new positions and that there is a focus on departures and turnover through attrition. He shared that there is a group that meets bi-weekly to discuss every new position, and that the majority of those position are the result of people leaving. The group discusses if a position needs to be filled and at what rate. Mr. Geoghegan added that one factor considered is the growth in the number of students. He stated that the university cannot add an unlimited number of students without adding the faculty and wraparound/support services needed.

Secretary Beckham remarked that UConn is, among its peers, at the high end in terms of the student-to-faculty ratio, based on the data he has seen from the federal government. Ms. D'Alleva responded that one of the challenges is that, as UConn add students, those students are often going into high demand areas where faculty are already full up and teaching at maximum capacity in areas such as engineering, business, and the health professions, which demands additional faculty. In addition, she stated that as UConn increases its research productivity, they are hiring research faculty who are grant funded and who are working on those research projects.

Secretary Beckham then asked about the sections that have fewer than 10 students in a class. He believes that number is about 12% of the sections. Ms. D'Alleva responded that while UConn has a number of small classes, some of the classes are appropriately small in areas such as studio arts and senior seminars, where pedagogically a small size class is appropriate. She further stated that these types of classes are distinct from classes that are under enrolled and where there is capacity. She added that the university needs to make sure that every seat is being filled and that they are being efficient about the range, type, and size of the classes offered. Secretary Beckham applauded the needs assessment referenced by Provost D'Alleva.

Secretary Beckham then asked if the change in the fringe rate has made UConn more attractive for grants now that the fringe rate is a lot smaller. Provost D'Alleva responded that they seen a significant increase in the number of grants from last year to this year, with more in the pipeline.

With regard to fundraising, Secretary Beckham alluded to the targets that were included in the legislation that renewed the UConn 2000 program, with some matching requirements for several years in the future. He asked if UConn is on track to meet those targets. Ms. Yancy responded that they believe they will be on track to meet those targets this year and that the campaign public launch in April will help ensure they are on track for subsequent years.

Secretary Beckham then asked if UConn has a contingency plan should the university not receive the \$73 million it is seeking. Mr. Geoghegan stated that university is doing a 5 year outlook plan, which includes the strategic enrollment plan, that will look at the constraints UConn will need to consider and the opportunities for revenues that might be available. He added that the university will continue to work on the expense side with regard to enrollment and programming, as well as across the university and institutional support for savings. He stressed that the process will take time and that there is no "silver bullet"; rather, the hope is for the university to develop a full revenue and expense plan in the out years.

Senator Osten asked if the increase in tuition was related not only to a per student increase, but to a greater number of students attending than in 2016. Mr. Geoghegan responded that Senator Osten was correct, that there have been tuition increases as well as student increases. He stated that there are different levers that are built into the tuition increases, such as an increase in out-of-state students and international students.

VP Furst added that here is a nominal fee for international student services, but it is not a significant portion of what the figures presented. Senator Osten asked for data on the tuition

numbers related to in-state, out-of-state and international students in order for the advisory board to have a clear picture of the factors that comprise the tuition rates.

Representative Nuccio stated that she would like data regarding UConn's administrative growth over the last 10 years, broken down at a staffing level. She then asked about the number of classes being taught by professors and if professors are teaching fewer classes.

Provost D'Alleva responded that the teaching load varies by discipline and type of appointment. She explained that in-residence faculty are teaching 7 classes per academic year, while tenured professors are typically teaching 4 classes per year. She added that in the sciences, professors typically teach 3 classes per year, as these faculty members are running large research labs and are driving large federal research grants. Ms. D'Alleva shared that the university is constrained at times by accreditation standards, such as in nursing clinical classes, where there can only be 6 students per faculty member, thereby increasing the number of faculty needed.

Representative Nuccio asked if the salary being paid to faculty in the sciences comes solely from the university or are they getting a full salary from the university plus money from research grants. President Maric replied that a 3 class per year load is the standard for research faculty and that UConn is in alignment with peer institutions. She added that in looking at their workload overall, the science faculty is also mentoring graduate students and providing service to the university and to their disciplines, while running major research labs.

Representative Nuccio reiterated her request to see data on expenditures related to the athletics programs, including how much of the athletics revenue supports the sports programs, and how much of expenses are being subsidized through tuition and state dollars.

Representative Nuccio asked President Maric to confirm that there will not be a tuition increase this year. President Maric responded that there is a 0% increase in tuition for this year and a "pause" for fiscal year 2026, and that the university is very sensitive to the issue of affordability.

With regard to Representative Nuccio's questions regarding UConn athletics, Mr. Geoghegan pointed out that UConn submitted to the advisory board the NCAA report that has the details on athletics from 2019 through 2024, with some projections for 2025 and 2026. He stated that he would be happy to get more information and data on the topic.

Representative Nuccio expressed her concerns regarding how the university will keep tuition flat while addressing rising costs. President Maric spoke to concerns that UConn has in being competitive with other land grant public universities and the potential for Connecticut students to choose an out-of-state experience. She stated that UConn is proposing a one year pause to allow the administration to reflect on all of the components are where the can create opportunities to generate additional revenues.

Senator Flexer requested that the UConn team provide a brief summary of what a Research 1 university is and a more detailed explanation in writing.

President Maric discussed the benefits of UConn's research activities, not only nationally, but globally. She also shared that the research dollars also provide opportunities to work with students from disadvantaged communities to develop skills in areas such as STEM, teaching and energy. She also shared some of the work being done in transportation and health disparity.

Senator Flexer requested greater detail on tuition increases over a longer time period, as well as a side-by-side comparison of tuition increases at UConn versus peer institutions. She then stated her concerns regarding the scrutiny that many programs are under at UConn and the potential for elimination of programs. She expressed the hope that the conversations occurring through the advisory board will provide a path to give UConn the resources it needs without tuition increases and cuts to programs and academic offerings.

President Maric reiterated her concerns about UConn remaining an affordable opportunity for families. She shared that the greatest reason that students leave the university is finance and financial pressures.

Secretary Beckham asked President Maric about opportunities to commercialize research beyond the UConn Health Center. President Maric responded that they are looking for a new financial model with regard to research and ways in which UConn can share in research revenues as products and processes become profitable.

Senator Flexer asked if the evaluation of the 70 programs and majors currently being conducted is that the largest part of the university's financial improvement plan, and if not, what the other elements are to the plan.

Mr. Geoghegan responded that there are a number of elements being considered, with a major one being the university's workforce and attrition and turnover. He stated that the low enrollment programs is just one area that the Provost's office is reviewing throughout all of the schools and colleges. Additionally, he shared that they are looking at all of the institutional support areas, such as facilities, campus planning, and all of the other support areas on campus. Mr. Geoghegan shared that departments were given a target reduction of 4% in FY 26.

Secretary Beckham thanked President Maric for the presentation and expressed his appreciation for the work she and her team are doing regarding the financial improvement plan.

Representative Walker offered her thanks for the presentation. She stated that while the cost of doing business at UConn has increased, so, too, has the cost of living increased. She stressed the importance of not limiting the state's educational opportunities. In addition, she remarked on the partnerships that UConn and UConn Health have with entities around the state and the opportunities that students have to work in their chosen fields while attaining their degrees. Representative Walker also stated that people have moved to the State of Connecticut so that their children can attend UConn. She shared her concern that focusing solely on the dollars can have many damaging returns, and that the state needs to focus on the society that policymakers are trying to build through education. She spoke of

the importance of having a tiered education system for seeking higher education opportunities.

Senator Osten and Representative Nuccio shared their thoughts on the benefits of asking questions in order to find solutions to UConn's financial situation. President Maric pledged her commitment to responding to questions posed and to on-going dialogue with the advisory board.

Representative Haddad encouraged the UConn team to continue to look at American Association of Universities as peers. He stated that the benefits of membership in the AAU are substantial and measurable in terms of UConn's ability to obtain research dollars. He shared his belief that UConn belongs in that organization, and while it will take a concerted effort on the part of UConn, that membership is part of a strategy that will help the university enhance the amount of research dollars it secures.

President Maric responded a study conducted by UConn demonstrated that the university is qualified to enter the AAU. She added that while UConn should be among the AAU universities, she wants to enter strong and that UConn is striving in that direction.

Secretary Beckham announced that the next advisory board meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, at 10 o'clock in Room 1D and via Zoom.

Seeing no further discussion, Secretary Beckham adjourned the meeting at 3:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Keane, Administrator