Academic Affairs UPDATE



October 29, 2026



INSIGHTS

From the Provost

These are exciting times at UConn! The Board of Trustees voted yesterday to establish the UConn Honors College, recognizing its importance to the University. Drawing on the research of distinguished UConn faculty members Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis, UConn Honors is a program that employs an evidence-based approach that encourages students to "explore, create, and lead" through original research, creative work, and engagement beyond the classroom.

The Honors College will elevate UConn's visibility and allow for significant growth over time, helping to recruit and retain more students with more opportunities to learn and explore. It will also help us attract philanthropic support and provide more resources for our faculty who devote their time to teaching and mentoring Honors students. I have every confidence in inaugural dean Jennifer Lease Butts. Jen's leadership has shaped UConn Honors and I know she will guide the College through its next chapter.

At the UConn Foundation Board meeting earlier this month, we discussed UConn's priorities and learned more about the Foundation's campaign progress. I am grateful to the commitment of board members and Foundation colleagues to UConn and their efforts to secure the resources we need to push UConn forward. An example of this is the creation of endowed professorships or chairs. The Everett R. Ernino Endowed Professorship in Floriculture in the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources was established at yesterday's Board of Trustees meeting to support a distinguished scholar in horticulture. Our amazing faculty and staff have an important role in the campaign by helping others understand what their support makes possible. I encourage you to read the update below to learn more about our progress and how you can get involved.

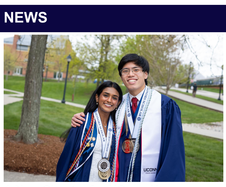
Last week, we also welcomed colleagues from the state's Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to campus. University leaders discussed the value of a UConn education, our research, our impact on the state, and our state funding needs and requests for the next biennium. We thanked them for their continued partnership and investment in the University.

With best regards,



Pamir Alpay
Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

NEWS



A New Chapter for UConn Honors

The Board of Trustees' October 28 approval of the UConn Honors College opens a new chapter in helping exceptional students discover how far their education can take them. Building on more than 60 years of Honors excellence and the dedication of faculty and staff, the college will give more students opportunities to pursue ambitious ideas, build close mentoring relationships, and contribute through research and creative work. Jennifer Lease Butts will serve as inaugural dean. Read more in UConn Today.



Lindsay DiStefano to Lead UConn's Research Enterprise

Lindsay DiStefano has been appointed vice president for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship after serving in the interim role since October 2025. An accomplished researcher and collaborative leader, she has helped faculty navigate funding disruptions while building connections across disciplines and campuses. Her leadership will continue to strengthen support for the people and ideas advancing discovery and making a difference in our communities. Read more in UConn Today.

UPDATES

BECAUSE OF UCONN | The Campaign for UConn Nation

Record Fundraising Supports UConn's Future

UConn is coming off its most successful first quarter of fundraising, driven by a significant increase in donors across giving levels. That momentum has continued, with the number of major gift donors up 58% compared with our three-year average and 32% compared with this time last year.

This generosity will directly support UConn's faculty, staff, and students, creating opportunities to advance new research, strengthen academic programs, invest in innovation, and help more students achieve their goals. As of early October, commitments to UConn's $1.5 billion campaign totaled $953 million, bringing the University closer to the $1 billion milestone.

This strong start demonstrates the confidence donors have in UConn and its future. That confidence begins with the work happening across the University. Donors invest because they see the impact of our faculty, the potential of our students, and the expertise and dedication of our staff.

We need your partnership to build on this momentum. If you have an ambitious idea, emerging priority, research opportunity, or program that could be accelerated through philanthropy, we encourage you to engage with your school or college's development team. The most compelling philanthropic opportunities often begin with the ideas of our faculty, and we want to work together to bring those ideas to donors who share your vision for what UConn can accomplish.

AN I3 INITIATIVE — NEAR

A New Approach to Faculty Activity Reporting

UConn is developing a new faculty activity reporting system, NEAR, to replace Interfolio FAR. Led by UConn's i3 team, the project builds on the database supporting Lincus and aims to provide a reliable, more cost-effective system shaped by faculty needs and connected to other University systems.

Faculty should continue entering scholarly activity into FAR until further notice. Information entered in FAR will transfer to NEAR. Interfolio's separate RPT module, used for the promotion, tenure, and reappointment process, will remain in place, with the goal of connecting the systems to reduce duplicate data entry.

Visit the NEAR project page to follow progress, share ideas, or participate in a feedback session. Additional details, including the transition timeline, will follow.

DATES and DEADLINES

QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS®

Invite Your Contacts to Participate in QS Ranking Surveys

Faculty can help ensure UConn's global reputation reflects who we are as an institution by inviting colleagues and professional contacts to participate in the QS Academic and Employer Reputation Surveys, which significantly inform the QS World University and Subject Rankings. Please reach out to your collaborators at US and international academic and research institutions, and industry/corporate partners that recruit from UConn using this QS-approved invitation.

Individuals must first give consent for UConn to share their contact information with QS using the form. QS will then email survey invitations beginning in December. Please send invitations by **November 6** to support UConn's first submission of contacts. For assistance, contact Marisa Tallevino in Global Affairs.

BLUE Town Hall Recordings

The October 13 BLUE town halls brought faculty and staff together in person and online to learn about UConn's new budget model, ask questions, and share feedback. Thanks to all who participated. Faculty and staff are encouraged to watch the recordings and review the presentation to learn more about the new model.

The discussion will continue at the **November 2** University Senate meeting, with time reserved to answer additional questions about BLUE. Tune in through the livestream; meeting details, materials, and access information are available on the University Senate website.

Help recognize the outstanding scholarship, service, and community partnerships that strengthen UConn and its impact. Nominations are now open for the following awards:



Submit a nomination for the 2027 MLK Legacy Awards!

The MLK Legacy Awards honor individuals and organizations who demonstrate a commitment to equity, justice, nonviolence, and social change.

Nominations are open to undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, alums, community members, and teams or organizations. Individuals may nominate themselves or nominate someone else whose contributions reflect the principles and values of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Nominations are due by November 20, 11:59 p.m. ET.

We encourage you to help us recognize members of our community whose work and impact embody Dr. King's legacy.

Learn more about the award criteria and submit a nomination

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