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## Introduction and Overview

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## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW: MAJOR CHANGES IN THE LAST TEN YEARS**

The last ten years (1995-2005) have been ones of tremendous growth for the University of Connecticut, in terms of quality, reputation and physical infrastructure. Indeed, the changes at the institution have been so profound that this period is sometimes referred to as, "The Transformation." A fundamental part of this transformation has been based on a two billion dollar, twenty-year capital improvement initiative funded by the Connecticut General Assembly, the UCONN 2000 and 21st Century UCONN projects. The primary impetus for this unprecedented support for a public university was the State's desire to provide incentive for Connecticut young people to attend college in the state and to prepare an educated and technologically advanced work force to enable the state to be competitive in a globalized economy. Prior to the passage of the UCONN 2000 legislation in 1995, the fifty-three percent of high school graduates going on to college were leaving the state (1994 data). Concerned by data indicating that students tend to remain in the state where they go to college, the Legislature wanted to reverse the "brain drain" and therefore retain Connecticut young people as permanent residents. The dilapidated state of university facilities was a major cause of many Connecticut high school students electing not to attend the University of Connecticut campuses. Further, the fundamental physical and technological infrastructure of the institution needed repair and upgrading. UCONN 2000 provided the University of Connecticut with the resources to address these problems. Another goal of the building program was and remains fostering the research endeavors of the university to assist the state in remaining competitive by maintaining a high level of education and technological expertise in a globalizing economy.

The physical transformation of the University of Connecticut funded by the UCONN 2000 and 21st Century UCONN projects has been remarkable and has fulfilled the wishes of the General Assembly. As a result of the UCONN 2000 and 21st Century UCONN programs, the University of Connecticut now has new facilities including the School of Business, Information Technology (School of Engineering), Biology-Physics, Pharmacy-Biology, "CLAS building" (housing the CLAS Dean's Office and the departments of English, Statistics and Geography), and regional campus facilities at Stamford and Waterbury. Further, there have been significant remodeling or additions to the School of Nursing, Wilbur Cross Students services building, the former School of Business building which is now the Center for Undergraduate Education building, the Neag School of Education building, Avery Point campus buildings, and the Law School. Plans for future major new buildings or remodeling are on-going. In addition to academic facilities, a number of student residence facilities have been built or renovated, and all student living areas have had sprinklers installed. Very early on in this decade, the University hired consultants to design a Master Plan for physical construction at the campuses and to suggest improvements in parking and transportation. These efforts have resulted in the acceptance by the Trustees in 1997 of a core campus Master Plan, followed by an Outlying Parcels Master Plan in 2000, and a revision of the core campus Master Plan in 2006. Having a dependable source of capital money available over an extended period has enabled the University of Connecticut to obtain efficiencies and advantages in its building program that would not have been available if the same amount of money had become available in a piece-meal fashion.

The extensive building program at the University of Connecticut has allowed the state to reach its goal of retaining Connecticut's top high school talent. The institution has had eleven years of steady increases in the SAT scores of incoming freshmen and has attracted more than 100 valedictorians and salutatorians for the freshmen class in each of the last two years. The school students once viewed as a safety school now is in demand. Applications over the past 10 years have doubled for freshman slots in Storrs and the acceptance rate has gone from 70 percent in 1995 to 51 percent in 2005. UConn has also increased the number of minority students in its Storrs freshmen class by 61 percent since 1995. It has also increased its freshman retention rate from 86 percent in 1998 to 92 percent in 2004. The "brain drain" has become a "brain gain" for the state and has fulfilled the wishes of the General Assembly. To foster the education of these students, the University has overhauled its General Education requirements, strengthened its Honors program, increased its undergraduate research program, and identified Undergraduate Enrichment as one of six Areas of Emphasis in the Academic Plan. It has revamped its Office of Sponsored Programs office, which supports and oversees grant administration, and taken steps to foster research, especially of an interdisciplinary nature.

The increased status of the University of Connecticut as an outstanding asset of the state has been reflected in fundraising activities. The General Assembly provided initially, as part of the UCONN 2000 program, matching funds for donors of endowment. This matching fund program energized donors who have contributed to a successful \$300 million capital campaign, and helped grow the endowment from \$50 million in 1995 to \$299 million in 2005-06. Alumni are so generous that the University ranks, according to U.S. News & World Report, seventh in the nation among public universities for percentage of alumni giving.

The tremendous amount of change at the University of Connecticut has produced some "growing pains." A particularly important challenge has been employing enough faculty to teach the expanded student body, while at the same time maintaining a research focus. Due to some early retirement incentive programs, the overall number of

faculty has declined in the last ten years while the number of undergraduate students has climbed. In the last few years, the university administration has sought additional funding from the General Assembly to hire additional faculty. The legislature has responded by supporting recent budgets that have allowed the hiring of more than fifty faculty members and by appropriating four million dollars in fiscal year 2006 to support hiring Distinguished Faculty and Entrepreneurship programs. However, this endeavor has had limited success and it is estimated that as of the beginning of Academic Year 2006-07, there is a need for as many as 175 new faculty. Because of the magnitude and rapidity of the UCONN 2000 building program, some unfortunate mistakes occurred in the construction program, particularly regarding new student residential facilities. The University administration, in collaboration with the Trustees, has been very proactive in dealing with these problems and has hired new staff to oversee construction and administration of the building program, and established new processes, policies and procedures regarding construction and oversight.

During the last ten years, the research endeavor at the University of Connecticut has remained steady. The number of graduate students has remained fairly stable, as have research awards and expenditures. The University of Connecticut Health Center has increased its research output and externally-generated outcome. The Academic Plan has set goals for increasing research expenditures and grant applications and size. It also sets goals for increasing the ranking of doctoral programs in the National Research Council survey. The Graduate School/ Research Foundation at the Storrs campus has had five deans (including interims) in the last ten years, and a national search for a sixth conducted in academic year 2005-06 did not result in the appointment of a permanent dean. The present interim dean has been appointed for two more years. The present interim dean is working to increase the institution's goals of increased reputation in research and graduate education. The 2007 General Assembly's appropriation of two million dollars each for Entrepreneurship and Distinguished Faculty programs demonstrate the state's strong commitment to research and outreach.

The below is a summary of the contents of each standard chapter.

**Standard One: *Mission and Purposes.***

The University of Connecticut is a comprehensive Research Extensive state Land and Sea grant institution. It has two very large campuses, the main campus at Storrs and the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington, as well as seven other major instructional sites throughout the state. As part of the NEASC self-study effort, a faculty-staff committee reviewed the Mission Statement of the University. After a series of vettings throughout the University of Connecticut community and consideration of the Statement at several Board of Trustees meetings, a new Mission Statement was approved by the Board in 2006.

**Standard Two: *Planning and Evaluation.***

The University of Connecticut has a deeply embedded culture of planning and evaluation. It also has a successful history of carry-through on these plans, particularly regarding the development of the physical facilities. Its strategic and academic planning have been guideposts for coalescing academic developments with the building programs. Details plans have been made and implemented for a number of undertakings, including such subjects as diversity enhancement and dealing with student substance abuse.

**Standard Three: *Organization and Governance.***

As a Research Extensive State Land and Sea Grant institution, the University of Connecticut offers a wide array of degree programs, ranging from Associate of Applied Science through doctoral, primarily at the main Storrs campus and the Health Center in Farmington, but also at five regional campuses (Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, Waterbury, Torrington), the Law School campus, and the School of Social Work campus. The 108 undergraduate majors are organized into eight schools and colleges. Because of the breadth, variety of disciplines and disparate locations of the institution's offerings, its organization and governance are complex. Its organization is a matrix structure, characterized by a high degree of shared governance between the faculty and the formal administration. The majority of the workforce at the institution, including all of the faculty at the main campus at Storrs and the regional campuses, are unionized and employment relationship is governed by collective bargaining contracts.

**Standard Four: *The Academic Program.***

Like the organizational structure, the academic structure and offerings of the University of Connecticut are complex, as would be expected of a Research Extensive flagship State Land and Sea Grant institution. Its undergraduate program has a strong underpinning in the form of the Center for Undergraduate Education. In 2004, the University completed a significant revision of its General Education Requirements, to further strengthen the undergraduate educational experience. It offers a wide variety of graduate programs, which fall mostly under the auspices of the Graduate School. Graduate degrees at the doctoral level include the Ph.D. and a number of "professional" doctorate programs, such as the M.D., D.D.S., J.D., Pharm.D. and Au.D. The university is striving to calibrate mechanisms for program review and assessment, including assessment of student learning outcomes. There are a number of program review and assessment activities occurring across the institution, but the intensity of these efforts varies widely.

**Standard Five: *Faculty.***

The University of Connecticut possesses a strong and nationally recognized faculty. A large majority of the faculty hold the terminal degree in their field. In order to gain tenure, faculty must pass through a rigorous six year review process. A large number of technological and staff resources are available to support faculty in their teaching, advising, research and outreach efforts, although there is a need for more staff. At present, due to a confluence of increased student body size and retirement-driven diminution of faculty size, the faculty to student ratio of the University of Connecticut is higher than it has been in many points in its recent history, and is higher than its identified real and aspirational peers.

**Standard Six: *Students.***

By design, the quality of the University of Connecticut undergraduate student body has increased over the past decade, as have the student retention rates. The institution has continued to recruit and graduate high quality graduate students. The Division of Student Affairs, the Graduate School, and the Law, Medical and Dental Schools offer high quality, extensive student support services.

**Standard Seven: *Library and Other Information Resources.***

The unprecedented twenty year, two billion dollar UCONN 2000 capital improvement program has greatly benefited the University of Connecticut Libraries and the Division of Information Technology Services, as well as the University Registrar's Office. Plans to upgrade and keep current a wide variety of technology have been made and implemented. The university is beginning to plan how to provide high quality information technology services (including Library services) once the UCONN 2000 program ends in 2015.

**Standard Eight: *Physical and Technological Resources.***

The University of Connecticut has been the recipient of a two billion dollar capital improvement program that has transformed the appearance at all of its locations and has supported the development and maintenance of up to date technology. Challenges for the future include synchronization of myriad planning, review, inspection and auditing processes that have become part of the physical and technological planning and construction activities, and beginning to plan for maintenance of physical and technological resources when UCONN 2000 ends in 2015.

**Standard Nine: *Financial Resources.***

The University of Connecticut has a complex operating budget of roughly \$1.5 billion dollars (including Storrs, the regional campuses and the Health Center) and is in the midst of expending monies associated with an approximately \$2 billion dollar capital expenditures plan. Sources of university operating funding include State of Connecticut appropriations, student tuition, grants and contracts, donations and auxiliary enterprise revenues. Under the direction of the Board of Trustees, the President, the Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, the Provost, and the Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, financial budgets are approved in advance, expenditures are made in accordance with these budgets, and all disbursements are monitored and audited.

**Standard Ten: *Public Disclosure.***

The University of Connecticut is a public flagship institution with a strong cohort of concerned constituencies, including the Connecticut General Assembly, alumni, students and their families, entities who participate in university outreach activities, and the citizens of the State. Therefore, there is a great deal of interest in obtaining disclosure of activities at the university, ranging from the more traditional information contained in a university catalog, to information about organizational, planning, operations, and personnel changes. While strongly committed to freedom of information, the institution must weigh the public's desire to be informed against the privacy and legal rights of individuals whom it employs or organizations that it has various types of relationships with.

**Standard Eleven: *Integrity.***

The University of Connecticut is dedicated to the highest standards of integrity. To demonstrate this commitment, in the last few years, it has expanded its traditional audit activity by the creation of the Office of Audit, Compliance and Ethics. This office, which augmented the former university audit unit, has a Chief Audit and Compliance Officer, as well as an Ethics Compliance Officer and a Privacy Officer. The Board of Trustees recently adopted a Code of Conduct and received a University Ethics statement. Faculty and staff will receive training in the Code of Conduct and will continue to receive training by the Office of Diversity and Equity.