

## **Annual Report of the Senate Growth and Development Committee April 27, 2020**

Under the overarching theme of “University in Transition,” the Growth and Development Committee agreed that the general emphasis we would pursue during 2019-2020 would be to learn more about the university’s plans and progress toward building its strength as a public university for which research is a central feature of the scholarship, instruction, and service functions it carries out. In particular, the theme the Growth and Development Committee focused on was how different units at the university plan to contribute to the President’s strategic goal of doubling research and scholarship at UConn, as well as challenges/barriers that interfere with their ability to effectively support this goal.

Although the committee will continue this information gathering during 2020-2021, discussions with the guests who met with the committee illuminated several issues that will require continued attention and resources from the University as well as several opportunities for growth. These are highlighted in the summaries of our discussions with each guest.

The Growth & Development Committee also acknowledges that critical and unforeseen changes for the University have taken place during the past three months. Due to the severe changes of the educational environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee recognizes that faculty and students carry a significant additional burden. Converting in-seat courses to the online format became a challenging task, particularly, for courses based on lab work or other science-related exercises. The next body of the G & D Committee needs to consider faculty preparedness for online-only delivery and identify the required support from the University leadership and services.

The following guests met with the committee during 2019-20.

- Scott Roberts, President & CEO UConn Foundation
- Michelle Williams, Associate VP for Research (Dr. Williams’ portfolio is research development)
- Pamir Alpay, Assoc. Dean for Research & Industrial Partnerships, Executive Director UConn IPB/Tech Park
- Anne Langley, Dean UConn Library
- Juli Wade, Dean CLAS

In addition to questions specific to their particular units, all guests who met with the committee addressed the following questions.

1. What new or continuing initiatives are planned by [your unit] to facilitate meeting the President’s goal of doubling research at UConn?
2. What challenges or barriers does [your unit] encounter in your efforts to facilitate/support faculty and student research efforts and initiatives?
3. How does [your unit] plan to leverage/support the strengths of the regional campuses and UConn Health in your strategic plans?

*Key points of discussions with each guest of the committee*

### **Guest: Scott Roberts, President & CEO, UCONN Foundation (February 3, 2020 Senate Meeting)**

Despite the relatively slow start in growing the University’s endowment, over the past eight years, the endowment has increased by over 100 million dollars. Roberts described the Connecticut Innovation program, in which the Foundation identifies donors willing to give to professorships/chairs as well as the creation of major naming opportunities across the university, as vehicles that the Foundation hopes to use to support the recruitment of new research-active professors to the university.

He also recognized two particular challenges that the Foundation faces in soliciting donations that will support research efforts and the research environment: First, many donors don't understand research, so they have to educate them. Also, some donors are reluctant to give to public universities because they think that states should fund them. Again, this requires educating donors about how little UConn actually receives from the state, beyond capital projects.

When asked whether there is a different incentive or rewards structure in place that favors donations to sports as opposed to academic programs, the answer was no, it is structured the way for both academics and athletics, although through athletics, donors can often obtain tickets through donations.

Regarding questions about how priorities are set for solicitation efforts, Roberts explained that it is a common misconception that the Foundation is defining the priorities; it is the Deans and leadership who do so. Opportunities for faculty to influence those priorities lie discussions with University leadership. There was some discussion of ways that the Foundation might partner with OSP to expand opportunities for external support and to provide support that would nurture research efforts that are promising, but have not yet garnered external support. The Foundation does partner with OSP through their office of Corporate Sponsorship. On the other hand, the Foundation is limited in its ability to allocate a portion of money raised to certain areas, as a way of nurturing them, because only about 1% of funds are not restricted by donor intent.

**Guest: Michelle Williams, Associate VP for Research (February 7, 2020)**

Dr. Williams described various initiatives ongoing at the Office of the Vice President for Research and discussed a number of concerns and challenges they are facing.

Of concern, she noted that the HURD survey showed UConn dropping on several indicators of research growth. In the past decade we have dropped from 55 to 59 among public institutions; if we maintain the status quo we are projected to drop to 120 in the next 10 years. Doubling our research expenditures would bring us back to where we were previously. To do this we would need to increase research expenditures by 8.8% per year for 7 years, and the OVPR believes this is possible. They have identified 10 peer/aspirant institutions that have achieved sustained growth in this range and are looking at their strategic plans for any lessons learned that we might utilize.

Some initiatives that UConn has begun have included growing non TT research professors (with President's support) and investing some of F&A in seed grants. The ROI appears to be positive: \$1M invested in 2015 saw \$14M in new funds over the next 3 years. Altogether there are now nine internal funding programs (seed funding has increased by approximately \$1M over the last 3 years. The OVPR has also used \$3M for buying down fringe rates – this is terribly important, but not sustainable.

Regarding federal funding growth opportunities, UConn has seen increased success in areas such as health behavior. Increased industry partnerships is another growth opportunity. However, some of these funding opportunities are somewhat volatile.

Regarding challenges for OVPR, there continues to be lack of bandwidth at OSP to handle contracts and other agreements. The office has recently added new staff dedicated to handling large multidisciplinary agreements. Nonetheless, there are still gaps in staffing that create bottlenecks that interfere with timely turnaround.

There was also some discussion of what is being done to meet Regional campus needs. With the exception of Avery point, there has not been much outreach to date.

OVPR sees themselves as the stewards of the money brought to the university. Their goal is to develop partnerships with faculty to identify areas for OVPR to help develop grant writing mentoring. Schools and colleges can partner with OVPR on that. One strategy is to target people who are persistent but not successful and to mentor them to become successful in their efforts.

**Guest: Pamir Alpay, Associate Dean for Research & Industrial Partnerships/Executive Director UConn IPB/Tech Park (February 21, 2020)**

Dr. Alpay updated the committee on activities at the Center. New space recently came on line at the Center. Users of the Center right now are mainly UConn graduate students, postdocs and technicians. It was also noted that, in addition to the Tech Park site, there are other sites, including incubator space (School of Agriculture), a similar facility on Farmington campus and the Synchrony Center in Stamford

Dr. Alpay discussed with the committee some strengths of the Center, as well as areas they would like to grow. The Center has supported educational research, research collaboration model projects that involve faculty, students, and endowed chairs. Right now these primarily involve engineering and agriculture. There are twelve major collaborators now. Some centers have projects that are faculty-driven but of interest to the sponsor; others are sponsor driven and UConn provides the expertise. Regarding funding, some of these are government funded, others are corporate funded. Looking to the future a Global Technology Center is in discussion. If this comes to fruition, the current square footage of the facility would be filled to capacity.

Challenges for the Technology Center include working effectively with OVPR to secure viable contracts and arrangements. Geography is also a challenge, given the location of the facility on the outskirts of campus and infrequent bus service. In addition, maintenance of the physical facility is insufficient because of budget limitations.

Some opportunities for that have been identified for growth include pharmacy/pharmaceutical sciences and 3D printing, and collaborations with insurance companies (e.g., failure analysis). It was also noted that IPB can be used for senior projects, internships (grad and undergrad) and similar kinds of life transformative educational experiences, in support of one of the other major Presidential goals.

Regarding future efforts, IPC/TC plans originally emanated from needs identified by Provost Mun Choi. It could benefit from a new needs analysis for the next 10 years. Dr. Alpay envisions much more DOD work in the next decade. A challenge in this regard is that there is currently not the infrastructure for this kind of confidential work. Needed are resources for cybersecurity, training, legal protections, etc. They are working with OVPR office on these issues.

**Guest: Anne Langley, Dean UConn Library (March 6, 2020)**

Dean Langley shared the University Library new strategic framework 2020 that was presented to the Provost in March.

The library is extremely short-staffed and budget-deficient. It was excused from the 2018 rescission, but is nonetheless basically operating with a skeleton staff, and few areas remain where cuts can be made.

Of note, staff cuts have been made (although growth is needed), there has been substantial turnover (14 positions), and morale is low. To address this, this year an aggressive hiring replacement plan is in place. Three of 11 vacancies have been filled so far. The Library has also included a staffing strategic wish list in their strategic plan, which also recognizes the importance of staffing for regional campuses.

Looking to the future, the Library is expecting a 2.2% permanent rescission in the collections budget. This amounts to \$2.2M cuts in journals, which will result in 70-80% cuts in subscriptions.

There is a real and severe infrastructure issue at the library. A variety of cost-saving and revenue-generating possibilities are being actively pursued by the library. For example, the Library is working with Association of Research Libraries to lobby publishers about price gouging. One suggestion/question was whether a portion of OSP overhead charges could/should be directed to the library. Other possibilities floated were fee-based structures (e.g. a student libraries fee) or a sports "tax" directed toward supporting the library.

**Guest: Juli Wade, Dean CLAS (March 27, 2020)**

Dean Wade discussed initiatives mainly focused on issues of recruitment and retention, breaking down silos to increase multidisciplinary effort, and mentoring both junior and mid-level faculty.

CLAS is in the process of developing a new strategic plan which should be completed in draft form by the end of the Spring semester. Key themes that have already emerged are diversity and inclusion, interdisciplinarity and mentorship. The college has already started implementing strategies consistent with the developing strategic plan.

CLAS is directing efforts toward fostering interdisciplinary research and broad inclusive environments. As an example CLAS is hosting "research conversations" based on interdisciplinary themes suggested by faculty with the goal of establishing new interdisciplinary research collaborations. The college has also called for proposals for new interdisciplinary projects and will be awarding seed grants.

CLAS has also put substantial resources into three cluster hires that address different aspects of diversity and inclusion. Each of the cluster hires is interdepartmental and targets three hires. The areas of focus for the clusters are: Diversity science, Health disparities and Indigenous studies. The College plans to follow up among and within these clusters to promote interdisciplinary scholarship.

The reorganization of Associate Dean responsibilities also reflects the priorities of the College. In particular, the creation of two new portfolios - diversity and inclusion, and research and graduate affairs – will support those priorities.

Fostering interdisciplinarity is a strategic goal that the college (as well as the University) has not had much success with in the past. Dean Wade expressed her belief that it is a challenge, but one that CLAS is beginning to make headway on. Research expenditures is an important measure, and CLAS is advancing the quality of scholarship in new directions. She noted that we have new disciplines in CLAS and that the College is adding a true deliberate effort to get people connected and to sustain those connections. Once the new hires are in place the College will have three sets of cluster hires that are interdepartmental and interdisciplinary in focus. CLAS is talking about how to engage those clusters and individuals and communicate with strengths that exist on campus. The College is connecting and supporting people. Dean Wade cares a lot about mentoring and is investing in mentoring.

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**2019-2020 Meetings:**

September 6, 2019, 10:00am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

December 6, 2019, 10:00am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

January 24, 2020, 10:00 am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room.

February 3, 2020, 4:00 pm, Rome Ballroom (conducted as part of University Senate meeting)

March 6, 2020, 10:00 am, Hall Building, Senate Conference Room

March 27, 2020, 10:00 am, Zoom remote meeting.

April 17, 2020, 10:00 am, Zoom remote meeting.

**Committee Members:** \*Janet Barnes-Farrell (Chair), \*Michael Accorsi, \*A Anwar, \*Ming-Hui Chen, Robert Bird, Tracie Borden, Benjamin Christensen, Susanna Cowan, Faquir Jain, Brandon Jones, Greg Kivenzor, Jake Knowlton, Jessica McBride, Katherine McCarthy, Andrew Moiseff, Carl Rivers, Lyle Scruggs, Jeffrey Shoulson (Ex-Oficio), Deepa Shukla  
\*Senate Member 2019/2020

**Committee Charge:** *This committee shall keep under review the general changes, actual and prospective, of the University over time and may recommend any desirable expressions of Senate opinion on these matters. The committee may also provide on behalf of the Senate an evaluation and review of specific issues and activities related to institutional advancement. The committee shall include two undergraduate students and one graduate student.*