

May 2026

Dear Provost Alpay:

We write as concerned faculty to express our deep concern regarding the planned reductions in graduate teaching assistant support for FY27. In many departments and programs across the university, teaching assistant allocations are being reduced dramatically, in some cases by as much as two-thirds. These reductions pose a serious threat to both the university's graduate research mission and the quality of undergraduate education.

The impact on graduate education is already evident. Many doctoral programs report substantial declines in matriculation for AY27, following already diminished entering cohorts in AY26. Graduate students are central to the university's research enterprise, scholarly productivity, and long-term competitiveness. Sustained reductions in graduate support will weaken research output, reduce our competitiveness for external funding, and undermine the collaborative capacity necessary for large-scale and center-level grant opportunities. Peer and aspirational peer institutions continue to invest in graduate education; retreating from that commitment risks long-term consequences for UConn's national standing and research trajectory.

The effects on undergraduate education will likewise be substantial. Teaching assistants play a critical role in delivering high-quality instruction through discussion sections, grading, laboratory support, office hours, and individualized student engagement. Reductions of this magnitude will inevitably diminish the undergraduate learning experience. Faculty attempting to absorb these responsibilities will be forced to redirect time away from research, mentorship, and other scholarly activities, compounding the broader institutional impact.

We recognize that the university is operating under significant financial pressure, including reductions in federal research funding, constrained state support, inflationary pressures, and rising labor costs. We do not minimize the difficulty of the decisions currently facing university leadership, and we appreciate the challenges involved in balancing institutional priorities during a period of financial uncertainty.

At the same time, faculty observe continued investment in other institutional priorities, including athletics facilities, capital projects, and new faculty hiring initiatives. Regardless of the funding sources involved, the contrast between these investments and the scale of reductions to graduate instructional support raises serious concerns about institutional priorities. Coupled with reductions in IDC distributions to principal investigators, departments, and colleges, these cuts are placing extraordinary strain on graduate programs and the faculty who sustain them.

These reductions are difficult to reconcile with the university's stated commitments to research excellence and student success. Sustained cuts to graduate teaching assistant support risk long-term



damage to UConn's research profile, competitiveness, faculty recruitment and retention, and aspirations for continued advancement among leading public research universities.

We therefore urge the administration to restore graduate teaching assistant funding to at least 2024 levels, adjusted for contractual salary increases, and to engage faculty meaningfully in any future decisions affecting graduate education and instructional capacity. The long-term costs of these reductions—to research productivity, educational quality, and institutional reputation—will far outweigh the short-term savings they are intended to achieve.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeff McCutcheon", written in a cursive style.

Jeffrey McCutcheon
General Electric Professor of Advanced Manufacturing
Department of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering