

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2012 – 12 P.M.
STUDENT UNION THEATRE

Doing Hard Things Well

Good afternoon, everyone.

Well over a year ago, in December of 2010, I had the honor of being appointed as the first woman president of the University of Connecticut. I never thought I'd be fortunate enough to lead such a fine and beautiful university. My parents, both so incredibly poor growing up, were lucky to even attend a public university. So to lead such a fine university is very special to me.

Today is a good opportunity, now reaching the close of my first academic year at UConn, to reflect on what has been a truly terrific year for all of us who care so deeply about this institution.

One of the best people of UConn, so kind to me, is our own Professor Bruce Stave, who served us from the History Department for decades, and took the time to write a wonderful history of the University. I read every word, and of course tried to learn from the triumphs and challenges of past presidents.

This University is fortunate to have had so many excellent leaders, and I walk in their shadows. Nearly every day I wonder, “What would President Jorgensen or President Babbidge think of us now? Would they think I’m on the right track?” All of our past presidents, who loved UConn, tried to make it a better, more academically rigorous, and more progressive place. Let’s continue on, in their memory, and with their values, even though our world seems so much more complicated in 2012.

Every member of our community is responsible for our continued success and growth:

- **We have many amazing faculty to thank for the enormous strides they have made in groundbreaking research and scholarship. Their work inside and outside of the classroom are at the heart of what we do here at UConn.**
- **We are equally as fortunate to have so many passionate alumni and friends of the University who are eager to help shape and support our vision for the future.**
- **Our staff members from across the University bring their positive energy to serving our student body and the larger UConn community. Without our dedicated staff – from Facilities to Residential Life to Financial Aid – UConn would simply crumble. They are the backbone of this University and I hope our students and faculty see this clearly, every day.**

- **And our extraordinary students – now more than 30,000 strong – demonstrate their own ambition and commitment to excellence, reaching for ever-higher levels of achievement with every passing year.**

The fabulous work that all of you do on each of these fronts – from research and service to teaching and learning – make this University the tremendous institution that it is today and reflects the future that lies before us.

My first year here has exceeded every one of my expectations, offering more excitement and fulfillment than I could have anticipated.

Without a doubt, I am indebted to all of you across our University community who have made me, as well as my family, feel so welcome.

I am immensely proud to call UConn home – and for good reason. This is a University that possesses so many strengths:

- **Intellectual innovation across nearly every discipline**
- **Faculty distinguished on the national and international levels across fields**
- **Phenomenal students, of so many varied interests**
- **Stellar athletics teams**
- **Superb service to our local communities**
- **Facilities that have grown in leaps and bounds over the past decade – from the start of the UCONN 2000 program through to the extensive renovation projects that we see today, including our soon-to-be downtown Storrs Center**
- **And, most recently, UConn’s ranking among the top 20 public research universities in the United States.**

The list goes on.

Clearly, UConn is evolving – and rapidly.

Yet you may be surprised to hear me say that UConn can't do it all. No great university does everything well; and in light of a tough economy and recent budget constraints, we simply can't afford to. But we can plan strategically around our strengths, and then build upon them.

It is this vision for our future that I would like to outline for you today.

Our progress in becoming one of the leading public research universities in the world relies on four areas of focus: The first of which must be student success.

Each year, the University sets out on its search for the best, brightest, and most talented students – those who are most likely to excel, who will bring their own unique strengths to our institution, and who will represent UConn well in the world long after they graduate.

This is no small task. Our incoming class for Fall 2012 serves as a perfect example: The number of applications is booming like never before.

Although we will ultimately admit 4,525 freshmen for the fall, our task is to narrow that down from more than 30,000 applications – a record high. Even over just the past two years, the volume of applications has jumped by 36 percent.

As the number of applications rises, the selection process at UConn gets increasingly difficult. But the results keep getting better and better.

The evolution of our student body is proof of just that. For instance, take this past fall's incoming class of UConn freshmen:

- **82% of these students ranked in the top 25 percent of their high school class.**

- **Their SAT scores now average well above 1200 – higher than ever before.**
- **And, they are increasingly diverse. This past fall, the University had 208 percent more minority freshmen than the freshman class that entered in fall of 1995.**

To join the ranks of the very top tier of universities, we need to continue promoting these levels of achievement and diversity.

We also need to offer the best possible support to all students, who have come to exemplify UConn’s standard of excellence. This is true not only among our undergraduates, but also across our graduate programs, which continue to flourish as well.

UConn’s graduate applications and enrollment have both steadily increased in recent years. The programs themselves have also grown in prestige – kinesiology and psychology are

two examples of the sort of outstanding offerings that today attract students from all over the world to our campuses.

Graduate students are so vital to this University, and so very under-appreciated. They help professors teach well, they teach themselves, and most important, they are the future professoriate for America. In the summer, or during school breaks, they are here, learning, inventing, and becoming the brain trust for the future of this country.

There is no doubt that we are becoming a school of choice for some of the most competitive students in the United States. They are seeking us out for our nationally ranked academic programs and for the many creative learning opportunities available to them here at UConn.

This is certainly great news. But in order for our students to reach their full potential, we need to attract larger numbers of

high-caliber faculty who can inspire success and a love of learning.

The extraordinary growth UConn has experienced in student enrollment has in fact far outpaced the growth in faculty.

We are working to remedy this gap.

By fiscal year 2016, UConn is poised to add nearly 300 new faculty members to its ranks. This is a significant jump – one that is absolutely essential to expanding our capacity for exceptional teaching and research over the coming years.

UConn is actively working to recruit some of the nation's most prominent professors and researchers to add to our already exemplary faculty. This effort is focused on boosting not only numbers, but also the diversity of our University experts, across all of our Schools and Colleges – from engineering and medicine to education and the arts.

So many advantages come with investing in our faculty.

Greater faculty numbers mean a lower student-to-faculty ratio in the classroom. It also allows the University to expand course offerings, ultimately providing more students with the opportunity to graduate on time. As we have seen, attending for more than four years on the undergraduate level represents a substantial additional cost to students.

At the same time, bringing such a large number of new faculty on board will have a dramatic and positive effect on the University's overall research capacity in the years to come.

As one of the top public universities in the country, UConn is, and always should be, striving for great distinction in research – which is the second area of focus I want to bring to your attention today.

I have already pointed out the need to build on our greatest strengths. And here at UConn, research is obviously one of them.

Today, external research awards for our University and Health Center exceed \$200 million – a significant increase in total research awards from just five years ago.

We hear the news of UConn engineers, hydration experts, ecologists, and linguists, all carrying out studies in any number of diverse subjects, here on our campuses in Connecticut as well as on far-flung continents.

Yet it can at times be easy to gloss over the idea of research without really having a true grasp of the astonishing implications that much of it will have on our own future and on generations to come.

Even over just the past year, UConn has witnessed some extraordinary developments on the research front.

Consider just a handful of projects currently under way across our University:

- **Professor Tim Hunter, an expert in digital animation design and production, is leading UConn's interdisciplinary Digital Media Center. Here, students and faculty in fields as diverse as medicine, engineering, and business are working closely with artists in our School of Fine Arts to create innovative digital visualizations of their research work. Through creative 3D animation, they are transforming complex research data into visually stunning digital media.**
- **Professor George Sugai is one of this country's foremost authorities on emotional disorders, behavioral problems, and positive behavior support. At a time when schools**

are under mounting pressure to increase test scores, Dr. Sugai's evidence-based research shows a definitive link between academic achievement and school environment. His research has been so widely cited that he was invited to host the 2011 White House Summit on Bullying Prevention by the President and First Lady Michelle Obama. He has also provided several congressional briefings on safe school climate. George has been the Project Director or Co-Director of major training or research grants totaling over \$25 million.

- Quing Zhu, a professor in our School of Engineering, is developing an advanced, noninvasive form of medical imaging designed to improve the detection of certain cancers. Her research in this area could reduce the number of costly biopsy procedures performed each year, lead to potential savings in health care costs, and detect cancer earlier and more accurately than any other methods available today.

- **In UConn's Center for Health, Intervention, and Prevention, researchers from both our Storrs and Farmington campuses are leading efforts to intervene in the realm of human health. Across Africa and Asia, they are saving lives by designing and implementing strategies to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in at-risk populations.**

- **We also have UConn researchers engaged in the development of personalized medicine, an emerging field in which medical treatments will one day be tailored to suit an individual's unique genetic code. As part of one such project, genomics expert Linda Strausbaugh in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has united researchers in UConn's School of Dental Medicine and our Center for Applied Genetics and Technology. Together, they are working to alleviate the complications often faced by chemotherapy patients, by basing**

prevention and treatment on the patients' personal genetic profiles.

These are just a few of the groundbreaking research projects taking place across our University.

Many of them demonstrate the level of close collaboration taking place among our campuses and across disciplines. Each of them reflects the incredible value of research in solving real-world problems and improving quality of life for citizens here in Connecticut and across the globe.

Fortunately for the state of Connecticut, we have leaders and legislators in office who recognize the incredibly powerful impact that research like this can have.

Without a doubt, research advances our understanding of the world around us. It can affect our lives directly and indirectly, leading to everything from more innovative medical

treatments to cleaner energy sources to more effective ways of alleviating poverty.

Even beyond that, research can also inspire economic growth – in the form of new products, and, in turn, new partnerships and new companies.

This is in fact part of our mission as a public institution. We have the resources and intellectual capital here at UConn that can help contribute to the strength of this region now and into the future.

Many of you are now familiar with the buzz around the Bioscience Connecticut Initiative.

This is the \$864 million plan, championed by Gov. Dannel Malloy, that you have heard so much about in recent months. This major investment in our University Health Center will result in a new hospital tower, renovations to lab space, and

other major improvements to our Farmington campus, all of which will allow us to continue offering top-notch medical care to our state's residents.

But in addition to that, Bioscience Connecticut is also poised to jump-start Connecticut's economy for the long term.

It will promote innovative research collaborations between our own campuses and with outside businesses and industries.

It will help shape Connecticut into a productive and profitable leader specifically in the arena of bioscience, creating a world-class hub much like North Carolina's own Research Triangle, generating jobs as well as sustainable economic growth based on research, entrepreneurship, and commercialization.

As part of the larger Bioscience initiative, UConn has also recently had the great fortune of establishing a unique new

partnership with the internationally renowned Jackson Laboratory.

Jackson is a leader in genetics research and in the field of individualized medicine, which I touched on a moment ago. Soon it will be launching a billion-dollar project on our Health Center campus, in concert with our scientists and clinicians.

This partnership is truly a game changer for the entire University – one that we foresee having an equally profound effect on the surrounding region.

At the same time, we now also have in our sights the UConn Tech Park, which we expect to be up and running on the Storrs campus by 2015.

Like Bioscience Connecticut, the Tech Park is designed to spark the development and commercialization of new ideas – from manufacturing to advanced product development.

With flexible-use labs and highly specialized equipment, it will bring together UConn's own world-class scholars and researchers in partnership with industry scientists and entrepreneurs.

Here, we will be able to help usher our faculty's discoveries into the marketplace. We'll see their ideas and research findings translated into the creation of novel devices, new licenses and patents, revolutionary manufacturing processes, and a wealth of highly skilled jobs and pioneering new companies.

I want to reiterate how crucial these efforts will be for UConn's future: Every one of these initiatives is nothing short of transformative for our University.

We are eager to serve as a go-to institution for industry and entrepreneurs. Partnering with them, we can build long-

standing research relationships; collaborate on developing technology; establish thriving new businesses; and help to solve the critical challenges facing the citizens of Connecticut and the world.

UConn possesses so many gems. We have leading experts in such diverse fields as pharmaceutical development, vaccines, advanced materials, and energy management. In these and other areas, we need to work deliberately to market the exceptional level of innovation that is so abundant here at the University.

In short, when it comes to research and economic development, UConn is open for business.

All that said, it should come as no surprise that I am incredibly energized about what is in store for us.

UConn is not only very well prepared to build on our greatest strengths and become one of the world's finest public research universities; we are also enjoying a remarkable sense of momentum today.

Yet as a public university, we must recognize one simple truth: Sustaining this level of momentum can be a challenge in the face of competition.

You know as well as I do that we are working tirelessly to attract talented faculty and University leaders. We are vying for outstanding undergraduate and graduate students from around the world. And we are continually competing for federal and philanthropic support.

On every one of these fronts, the competition remains extremely fierce.

Add to this the financial reality that UConn’s operating budget has in recent years endured significant cuts from the state.

The investments that the state of Connecticut has made in our University, from the Tech Park in Storrs to Bioscience Connecticut in Farmington, have been extraordinary. We remain enormously grateful for this. Such support is rare at a time when many other public universities in the nation have endured only decreases in state funding across the board.

Yet direct state support has dropped, and now stands at just 28 percent of our University budget.

This decrease in state support is unlikely to reverse direction in the near future. Bearing this in mind, you may understand why philanthropy is one more area that remains essential to our University’s future success.

On the forefront of our University fundraising efforts is our UConn Foundation. The Foundation is in the midst of a capital campaign that in fact passed its midpoint this past December, raising upwards of \$300 million in private support for the University.

To date, total fundraising performance is up over 40 percent from last year and, in the first half of fiscal year 2012, the Foundation achieved a fundraising record, raising more than \$25.1 million in six months.

This is all fantastic news. But we can always do better.

I have said before that a University of our stature and size should have an endowment that illustrates its strength.

Reaching the \$1 billion mark with our own endowment is not beyond the realm of possibility, and is certainly in line with the endowments in place at other public universities of similar rank.

Building our endowment to this level means having the capacity to offer the excellent programs and services that will best serve our current and future student body.

A solid endowment allows us to support scholarships and attract renowned professors and researchers. It also gives us critical protection against the ups and downs of the economy.

In essence, having a growing endowment ensures our future excellence through the long term.

And as is the case with anything else we do, we will never settle for “average” or “just OK.”

We do anticipate that Bioscience Connecticut and the forthcoming Tech Park will result in a significant impact on UConn and the Health Center, just as UCONN 2000 profoundly

changed and revolutionized the University beginning in the 1990s.

But even with these promising initiatives on the horizon, even with our rising strength in academics and our growing powerhouse of faculty, this is not a time for complacency or modesty.

It is a time for action, a time to advocate on behalf of a tremendous University that each of you has helped to build.

I've spoken at length today about student success, research and economic development, and philanthropy. UConn's future depends on our ability to deliver in every one of these key areas.

But it also relies on our ability to make the world beyond UConn aware of the fact that we have earned the right to compete on the national and international stage.

The bottom line is: We need to communicate our message of excellence and ambition, and do it well.

With the invaluable support of our alumni, our University community, and the state of Connecticut, UConn has transformed its campuses, engaged exceptionally talented students, and distinguished itself with the kind of outstanding academic programs that are typical of the very best universities in the nation.

Whether you are faculty or staff, a student, parent, alum, or friend of UConn, each of you has in some way served as an ambassador of this great institution. You have helped shape our evolution as a University.

I want nothing more than to see us push this University forward on every level in the coming years. We are in an

exciting place, on the cusp of reinventing ourselves to become one of the top public research universities worldwide.

In the coming months, you will begin to hear more about our brand, or our unique identity, as an institution. I have charged leaders from across our community to join forces with the goal of pinpointing exactly what lies at the heart of our great University.

Putting into words what UConn stands for, where we outshine our peers, and what makes us tick presents a valuable opportunity.

When we articulate our unique brand promise, we effectively take the reins in showcasing our most exceptional strengths. We can actively reinforce what sets UConn apart and bring to light what attributes and accomplishments have perhaps gone unnoticed but deserve to be recognized.

Bear in mind that when I say ‘brand,’ I am not talking strictly about a tagline or logo. We are a large, thriving, world-class University at the top of our game, rich with history and brimming with promise. No single slogan or showy new graphic would ever convey all that we embody as an institution.

Yet how we perceive ourselves and what we understand to be at the essence of UConn can help inform how we present our University to the world.

We want to be able to capture the attention of superb students, spark the imaginations of brilliant researchers, and make clear to the citizens of Connecticut the value our University brings to this entire region, well into the 21st century.

If we fail to connect on any one of these levels, we do ourselves a disservice.

Think of the Googles and Apples of the world. They may not operate in the realm of higher education, but we may still learn from their success. They are widely known for what they do and where they excel. They deliver on their brand promise with consistency.

The CEO of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, says it well: “A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person. You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well.”

Though we may be spread out across Connecticut and far beyond, with UConn’s alumni, researchers, and students situated around the globe, I ask you to continue doing hard things well. I know we have the passion and pride for it. I see it in our University community every day, and it has been evident to me since I set foot on campus for the first time.

We can lead in many ways, and while it takes passion and incredible dedication to teach and discover, we do need to be led by our values. When I am long gone, I hope people will remember this period as one of scholarly excitement, progress, and international impact.

But what would make me as proud, is if this were remembered as a time when we made progress on our values, particularly civility and diversity. We have so many people and projects focused on these profoundly important ideas – from the planning of our fall civility metanoia (MET-AN-NOIA) to our search for a diversity leader in the provost’s office.

Let’s not lose our grasp of these two concepts as we march forward, because we are not a proud or decent institution unless we prioritize civility, tolerance, and the great change that comes with building a truly multicultural community.

Over the coming months, I look forward to working with many of you to turn your positive energy, your knowledge, and your dedication into further success and growth for our great University.

Many thanks once again for a productive and inspiring year.