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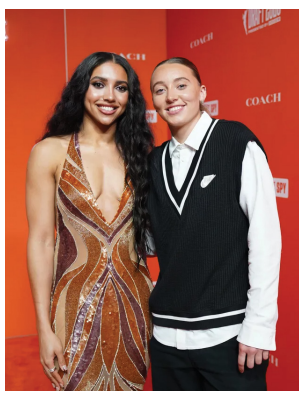


Yearbook publishing at UConn contends with budget deficit

by Kevin Guinan
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
kcg21003@uconn.edu

Production of free yearbooks for University of Connecticut graduates could come to a halt if Nutmeg Publishing doesn't receive a fee increase, the executive director said.

Nutmeg Publishing Executive Director Jack Wright said that Nutmeg's current five-year contract can't be funded past the 2026-27 academic year if the board of trustees doesn't increase their portion of funding from the student activity fee.

"I just feel like now only half of the student body is going to get their yearbook, and I think that's a pretty glaring issue that only I am thinking about," Wright said. "All of a sudden there's no yearbook for the class of 28-29, who knew that Nutmeg exists, are anticipating getting their free yearbook, but because Nutmeg is so underfunded there is a very real chance that they don't get that."

Financial constraints may force Nutmeg to either stop printing the yearbook or print one of a lot lower quality, Wright said. He added how quality has already been going down due to their choice of a cheaper contract with a 250-page limit, which increasingly has less space due to rising enrollment.

Nutmeg chose a five-year printing contract with Jostens at an annual rate of $110,000, which Wright said sums up to about $39 to produce a yearbook for each graduate. He said that it currently costs Nutmeg more to produce a yearbook than they receive in the $32 of student fees paid during a student's entire time at UConn.

Nutmeg's funding deficit led Wright to become a student member of the Student Activity Services and Fee Advisory Committee (SASFAC) to help advocate for a $3 increase from $4 to $7 per semester.

"I know that the business manager of the Daily Campus was on board for two straight years and got the Daily Campus a fee increase, so I thought I'd take a page out of [Naiiya Patel's] book and try that," Wright said.

Wright said that as a student member of SASFAC, he took issue with the way in which Nutmeg's application for a fee increase was handled.

"Ultimately the SASFAC decision hasn't gone Nutmeg's way, for reasons that I personally don't agree with," Wright said. He explained how during negotiations for the fee increase he felt as though Nutmeg was being held to a different standard than other campus organizations.

One example Wright gave was through SASFAC's recommendations for Nutmeg to manage the financial challenges by not sending a yearbook out to every single graduating senior as they've been doing since 2002, according to NBC news. Wright said the SASFAC process is supposed to be for student organizations to explain how much money is needed for organizations to continue their current level of programming.

"[SASFAC's] whole thing has been wanting to make [Nutmeg] do an opt in, which I believe is overstepping in the process," Wright said, adding that he'd be open to discussing an opt-in process without making it a condition for a fee increase. "It feels as though SASFAC is not adhering to their own mission as the board by not respecting what our current level of programming is."

SASFAC not considering Nutmeg's current level of programming isn't the only issue Wright had with the committee when applying for the funding increase. He said changes to the SASFAC staff before the final decision was made added to the frustration.

"The head of the SASFAC board was fired in between the hearings and when the board actually voted," Wright said, referring to David Clokey. "Him and I really talked quite a bit, and he really had an understanding of what Nutmeg needed, and I think he was quite sympathetic."

University Spokesperson Stephanie Reitz confirmed that Clokey's employment as an incumbent assistant vice president for the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs ended with the elimination of his role.

"The UConn Division of Student Life & Enrollment recently streamlined its organizational structure to achieve operation and fiscal efficiencies, including the elimination of two assistant vice president positions and the redistribution of those duties," Reitz said. "UConn deeply appreciates their service and to the university and its students."

Krista O'Brien, the director of Trustee Student Organization Support (TSOS), said she sent a letter to SASFAC advocating for Nutmeg due to her role overseeing the Tier III organizations that receive funds from the student activity fees.

"I haven't felt like there's been a need to submit a letter before... but I just feel like over the last few years Nutmeg has worked so hard and done everything the committee has asked for," O'Brien said about her involvement in the SASFAC process.

O'Brien also said SASFAC wasn't considering Nutmeg's current level of programming when she sat in SASFAC hearings.

"I think that the university can suggest that as an option to Nutmeg," O'Brien said about the opt-in process for graduates to receive yearbooks. "We can't compel them if Nutmeg doesn't want to do that. I don't think that's a reason to withhold a fee increase from them."

Rejections for the fee increases didn't directly cite the opt-in program, but Wright said odd reasons for the rejections, like postal issues, made him feel as though SASFAC was lying about their reasoning.

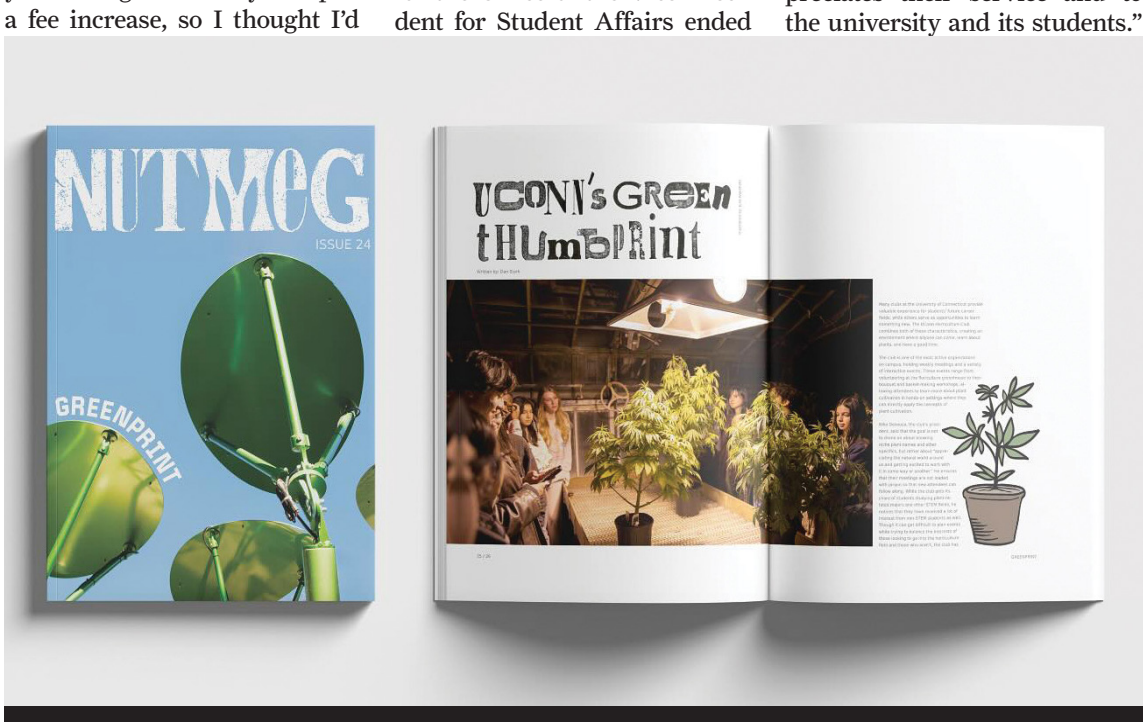
"We occasionally get some back. We get a lot of returns from China, for example, and into Taiwan and Korea. A lot of international students here, [their] books do get sent back," Wright said. "That's a custom thing, that'd be way beyond the scope of my job."

Nutmeg has previously tried to contact the UConn administration about the importance of funding the yearbook by bringing up its importance to the Alumni Center and the UConn archives. Wright said that the previous editor-in-chief, Josie Simon, presented an old yearbook to Dan Toscano during a board of trustees meeting last year and he "loved it" when Simon showed Toscano his old yearbook from 1987.

After Wright heard that SASFAC will not recommend a fee increase for Nutmeg, he said he was in contact with someone in the administration who said they'd talk with him, but Wright hasn't gotten a reply to his email for two weeks.

"We're one of the oldest organizations on campus. We've been here since 1915 producing the yearbook every year, and we think that the work we've done over the last 110 years should be respected in the form of support and an increase for Nutmeg," Wright said.

Wright said he plans to present at the next board of trustees meeting scheduled for April 29, according to UConn's website.



UConn Nutmeg Publishing's Spring 2025 Magazine. Free yearbooks for UConn graduates are threatened by financial constraints due to insufficient funding.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UCONN NUTMEG PUBLISHING ON FACEBOOK

LAMONT RELEASES $1.55 MILLION IN STATE GRANTS TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY ISSUES

by Gwendolyn Leonard
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
SHE/HER/HERS
gwendolyn.leonard@uconn.edu

Gov. Ned Lamont announced in an April 9 press release $1.55 million in state grants for 12 entities to increase access to locally grown, healthy food for those in need. These entities include different food pantries across the state, such as St. Vincent de Paul Norwich which received a $100,000 grant according to Lamont's press release.

"Every family should be able to access nutritious, locally grown food, and this program aims to eliminate barriers to healthy eating while also supporting Connecticut farmers and their operations," Lamont said. "This program was effective when it was supported by federal funding, and by releasing these state dollars we can help ensure that it continues to function and its mission can endure."

The entity with the largest grant at $200,000 was Northwest Connecticut Food Hub located in Torrington, according to the press release. This is an organization that connects a "network of over 40 farmers with food safety, training, marking, sales and logistics," according to their website. Some of their recent initiatives have included Farm to School, bringing fresh produce to local schools, and Senior Nutrition which supplies locally grown produce to Meals on Wheels, according to NWCT Food Hub website.

The funds are released through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant Program (LFPA), according to Lamont's press release. The LFPA program aims to, "maintain and improve food and agriculture supply chain resilience" according to its website.

To receive funding for the food grants, eligible entities submitted applications to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, according to Lamont's press release.

Connecticut has the highest food insecurity rate in New England and the "3rd highest rate among all Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states (behind only West Virgina...and New York)," according to the "State of Food Insecurity in Connecticut 2025" study done by the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity. Connecticut has the rate of 14.3% of the population being food insecure according to Feeding America's Map of the Meal Gap.

"Overall new data released in 2025 broadly suggests that food insecurity and the state of the wider food system in Connecticut have worsened in the last year," said the State of Food Insecurity study.



Gov. Ned Lamont at River Ridge Farm and Market with Connecticut Foodshare and Connecticut Grown. In light of food insecurity growing in the last year, Gov. Ned Lamont has allocated $1.55 million in grants to address the problem.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @NEDLAMONT ON INSTAGRAM

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