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COMIC BY ALEXA PAPPAS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Op-Ed:

FACULTY HAVE BEEN — AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE — MEANINGFULLY INCLUDED IN BUDGET INITIATIVE

by **Pamir Alpay**
UConn INTERIM PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
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At the University of Connecticut, we’re proud to have multiple wonderful campuses across Connecticut, each of which enriches our state through fact-based and forward-looking academics and research.

But in a recent op-ed in The Daily Campus, the Executive Committee of the American Association of University Professors sought to replace fact with fiction regarding an important initiative at UConn, and the result was deeply misleading.

The piece, which focused on the Budget Transformation Initiative currently being developed, contains so many misstatements that they cannot be left to stand unchallenged.

To explain the initiative in its simplest terms, it is a process to update the way in which UConn tracks and spends its revenue to best advance the university’s needs and mission in a transparent and easy to understand approach.

At the same time, conversations about institutional values and priorities are both important and ongoing at UConn. In fact, the university engaged in an extensive, community-driven process to develop its Strategic Plan, which clearly articulates the values, priorities and goals that guide our work. That plan reflects broad input from faculty, staff and other stakeholders, and provides a strong foundation for continued dialogue and reflection about our shared mission.

The initiative is not intended to redefine those values, but rather to ensure that our financial systems better support them in practice. The initiative will align budgeting decisions with specific academic and research-based metrics, ensure that centrally managed costs are fairly distributed and incentivize schools, colleges and other university units to allocate resources in alignment with priorities that benefit UConn as a whole.

Faculty had a prominent role in these discussions and in the thoughtful, transparent and productive process that gradually moved it forward. Yet despite this reality, the authors of the AAUP op-ed insist, without any evidence, that the opposite was true.

Their unfounded claims are easily disproved. Here are the facts:

- The chair of the UConn Senate Executive Committee — a faculty member who represents fellow faculty and others in the institution — participated in presentations at the very beginning of the process while the University reviewed potential companies to guide the initiative development process.
- The working groups, steering committee and core team included 77 members. Every working group contained at least one faculty member along with deans and associate deans — who also are faculty — along with staff, administrators and other stakeholders.
- UConn held listening sessions for the university community, promoting them through the Daily Digest and e-mailed announcements. The recordings also have been available online for viewing at any time since the events were held. These sessions were an opportunity to learn



UConn Storrs campus covered in snow on Jan. 20, 2025. UConn is currently creating its Budget Transformation Initiative to best advance the university’s mission according to an op-ed from UConn administration. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

more about the new budget model initiative, ask questions and share feedback directly with the project team.

- Between last summer and last month, nearly 800 faculty and staff participated in the listening sessions, small group discussions and other events to share their thoughts and ask questions.
- Members of the AAUP Executive Committee, the University Senate and its Budget Committee and others were engaged in the discussions — through their roles, they served as liaisons to other faculty.
- In addition to the university’s town halls and listening sessions, these faculty members held an open forum in January, which was advertised in the Daily Digest for three days. In addition, they updated their peers during the University Senate meeting in January.
- When the UConn AAUP’s president and an executive committee member penned an op-ed in another publication last fall, UConn budget officials reached out with an invitation to meet and go through any and every question and concern. A budget transformation initiative external consultant and UConn administration met with AAUP Executive Committee members ahead of a listening session — and we haven’t heard from them since.
- We presented to the University Senate, have continued to share updates via the website, UConn Today and emails; have welcomed emails and phone calls at any time; and even have an option on the website in which faculty and anyone else can submit questions or concerns anonymously with the Office of Budget and Planning.
- If none of those options appeal, the AAUP Executive Committee and others always have the opportunity to express their thoughts to the Board of Trustees, its committees, the UConn Senate and the offices of the Provost and President.

The facts are clear: UConn leadership has encouraged and engaged faculty participation at every step in this process and will continue to do so. The AAUP leadership does their membership and the university community a disservice by publicly mischaracterizing this effort and working to spread misinformation.