The Daily Campus
EDITORIAL BOARD:

Samantha Brody
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Patrick Minnerly
OPINION EDITOR

Gianna Cassino
ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR

Colin Hamilton
WEEKLY COLUMNIST

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed by individual writers in the opinion section do not reflect the views and opinions of The Daily Campus or other staff members. Only articles labeled "Editorial" are the official opinions of The Daily Campus.

Daily OPINION

OP-ED: UCONN SHOULD LISTEN TO THE GAMPEL FAMILY

by The Watts Family
pwr629@gmail.com

When Harry A. Gampel donated $1 million in 1989 to help build the basketball arena that has become the heart of Storrs and the Basketball Capital of the World, his generosity came with a clear, unambiguous condition: the facility would bear the name Harry A. Gampel Pavilion in perpetuity. Today, by relegating the Gampel name to a secondary subtitle behind a corporate sponsor — creating the "M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion" — the University of Connecticut is not merely updating a marquee. It is attempting to break a solemn promise and overstep its legal authority.

To add insult to injury, the administration has marred our campus's architectural character by plastering gaudy, illuminated M&T Bank signage across the building's exterior. That garish, lighted billboard is a Las Vegas-like eyesore that clashes with the surrounding campus's classic collegiate aesthetic and has no place in bucolic Storrs.

The Board of Trustees undoubtedly possesses broad administrative powers under Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10a-104 to manage university property — whether conferred by law or simply assumed through sheer, self-appointed omniscience — just as C.G.S. Sections 10a-104(c) and 10a-108 empower the university to enter into commercial contracts and sponsorship agreements. Similarly, C.G.S. Section 10a-105 authorizes the Board to accept and administer private gifts. However, statutory authority to manage property and sign new contracts is not a license to unilaterally rewrite existing ones.

Under settled principles of Connecticut contract and charitable gift law, when a public university accepts a restricted donation, it binds itself to the donor's conditions. A promise made "in perpetuity" does not expire after thirty-seven years simply because a more lucrative naming offer arrives. Attempting to circumvent that obligation through semantic gymnastics — claiming the Gampel name remains intact while subordinating it beneath a corporate title without the family's consent — is a distinction without a difference. It alters the fundamental benefit of the 1989 bargain and undermines the integrity of every gift agreement the university holds.

Furthermore, the administration cannot hide behind the doctrine of sovereign immunity to escape accountability. While sovereign immunity shields the state from certain unconsented claims for monetary damages, Connecticut courts have long recognized that state officials cannot invoke immunity when acting in excess of their statutory authority or violating binding constitutional and contractual obligations — precisely why the Gampel family's pursuit of equitable and injunctive relief to restore the pavilion's rightful name and remove the improper signage is both legally sound and morally necessary.

If UConn demonstrates that "in perpetuity" means only "until a bigger check clears," it sends a chilling message to every alumni donor, benefactor and Connecticut resident: this administration's word is only as good as its next revenue stream.

The Board of Trustees and University administration must honor the 1989 agreement, take down the illuminated M&T Bank signage, restore Harry A. Gampel Pavilion to its full and rightful name and remember that a public university's reputation is worth far more than $32.5 million.

UConn bleeds blue, not M&T Bank green!

Respectfully submitted,

Peter J. Watts, UConn BA 1993

Robin W. Watts, UConn BS 1993

Claire E. Watts, UConn BSW 2025

Brenna C. Watts, UConn BSW 2025

The Watts Family

Willington, CT 06279



The M&T Bank Center sign installed on Gampel Pavilion on Oct. 26, 2026. Gampel Pavilion has received a new name, being known as "M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion" following a new naming rights deal.
PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS