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Daily OPINION

WHO IS PUSHING GENERATIVE AI AT UCONN?

by The UConn-AAUP Executive Committee

For what purpose did our administration agree to enter student data into a corporate generative artificial intelligence (genAI) platform? In fall 2025, the UConn administration signed a contract with GrayDI that describes a request for students' (and their parents') non-public data for input into genAI (see pdf page 34). Did they do this to lower the cost of higher education for working families? No. The contract appears to pay nearly $200,000 to use our students' data to substantially inform the profitability of academic programs at UConn.

GrayDI advertises software that supports limiting a student's educational opportunities based on the community in which they grow up. Is that an ethical aim? UConn's Q&A says GrayDI will not be used this way. But we encourage the UConn community to read the contract in full (see pdf page 23).

Is this use of genAI at least safe and responsible? No. UConn declined to conduct a CT AI software impact assessment of GrayDI or to enter it into the CT AI software inventory. Although state law did not require these steps until October 1, 2026, these were basic safety protocols that were already in use and considered best practices. Given that genAI is evolving in unpredictable and, sometimes, dangerous ways, why opt out of Connecticut's AI safety programs?

UConn doesn't actually believe that genAI is risk-free. Notice how the contract dedicates pages to legal protections for both GrayDI and the administration. But for students, faculty and staff? Not so much.

Our administration promotes genAI use at UConn. They ask us not to close our minds to the possibilities. We don't. Generative AI could be a valuable tool, and UConn could grow into a leader in this field. If the plan is to deploy AI to fix economic and racial inequality, provide affordable healthcare and education, solve the climate crisis or build new safe jobs for our students, we will be fully supportive.

No technology is inherently good or evil. The question that real leaders should ask is not "How can this technology be monetized?" but rather "Whose values does it reflect?"

Generative AI is owned by billionaires and was built on stolen intellectual property, labor exploitation and environmental degradation. Cynical applications of genAI (such as GrayDI) make paying workers and critical thinking optional across Connecticut while siphoning public education funds away from working families. Instead of taking the lead in assuring safe, responsible use of genAI, UConn's top administrators are allowing students, faculty and staff to be exploited as customers and products.

UConn is not unique in this regard. Identical initiatives to purchase AI austerity software are being pushed by powerful boards, politicians and AI companies at universities across the US.

In the face of this corporate, elitist push to channel public funds away from Connecticut families towards large AI companies through software contracts, we encourage the UConn community to push back. The voices of students and families have been left out so far. Our experience is that students don't care for it. Our university's future should be aligned with the hopes and dreams of our students, not the cold dashboard of GrayDI. Let's help UConn's students to have a say in AI, and let's mobilize as a community to protect them from exploitation.

WHERE ARE ALL THE COMEDY MOVIES?

by Raegan Skelly
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2026 is my year of movies. Whether that's in theaters, or just at home, I'm watching as many movies as I can. I'm trying to get through the classics, movies I should've seen in my nineteen years. I got through a lot of older "boy" movies this past month, and thought I'd switch genres for October, focusing on comedy. What I've learned so far is that it is a difficult feat. Comedy movies are just not available on streaming. Google even does that annoying baiting where they tell you Prime Video or Apple TV has the movie, and I fall for it every time, but when you search it up, it just says it's available to rent or buy. And who has the money to shell out $4-10 every single time they want to watch a movie? I shouldn't have to get so desperate for a laugh that I paid $3.99 to watch "Good Boys" for the first time.



Oscar trophies line up in a row. The number of comedy movies that have won Oscars have declined in recent years.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OSCARS - ACADEMY AWARDS ON FACEBOOK

One of my best friends isn't a movie guy; he's seen next to nothing, so I'm trying to show him the highlights of each genre. We started out with romantic comedies last month, and let me tell you, you can watch a million romcoms on any streaming service. They have all the classics; they have the niche ones omitted from most recommendation lists. What they don't have though is pure comedy movies that have no romance involved (or if so, it's just a subplot, not included in the billing for said movie). People love to harp on the plight of the "romcom", how no one's making them anymore, but the loss of the comedy movie is far greater. Everything is a dramedy, or a horror comedy, or the aforementioned romcom. Nothing is just a comedy; they all must have a thing or be a part of a subgenre. To make matters worse, when you do finally find that pure comedy movie, you typically can't watch it without paying a rental fee. Even the movies deemed accessible, i.e. available on platforms, aren't truly available; you have to pay for a subscription to use the platform. Why are these comedy movies behind a paywall? Is it because movies of other genres now make more money, so they have to charge for comedies to even out the profit?

Real comedies aren't even awarded anymore. We all remember the year "The Bear" swept the Emmy's acting nominations for Comedy; it was a sham. They even broke the record for most Comedy wins in a single year. At the Golden Globes, comedy is paired with musical for nomination purposes. Comedic performances barely get Oscar nominations, let alone awards (according to TasteRay, less than 10% of Best Picture nominations have been comedies). Comedy is punished because it is less "distinguished;" people think it's easier to be funny than to act angry or upset. I've never gotten that take. I believe a character crying easier than I believe they're telling a joke, and it's not just an actor reading lines. Since comedies can't use awards as a marketing tactic, it puts more strain on the production company to sell the movie. Comedy doesn't get accolades, so they don't get made, they aren't in theaters, streamers don't pick them up, and I now have to be a sucker and pay $4 anytime I want to watch a comedy that isn't also a Christmas movie, or a drama movie, or a romance movie or an "insert subgenre here" movie.

This all begs the question: why aren't comedies being made, and is it just because they don't bring notoriety and award marketing? Not entirely. Comedies are a big risk for studios, as film director Josh Greenbaum puts it to GQ: "Comedy doesn't always translate internationally, which matters more than ever in the global marketplace. And it's incredibly subjective — what's hilarious to one person falls flat for another." Just because something is risky, though, doesn't make it unworthy of creation. You won't get a cult classic if you don't even attempt to make something outside of the box (or just something at all). Comedy movies invite passive viewers, which makes them great destressers. You don't need to pay too much attention like you would in a crime or thriller movie, you just need to laugh.

Now, don't worry, I can hear you: "why don't you just pirate the movie?" This is a fair question; I'll hand it to you. Pirating a movie is asking for your laptop to sporadically combust on a Monday morning, or to get random pop-up advertisements that refuse to go away. Plus, I don't have an HDMI cord (user error, I'm aware) so I could only do a solo watch, and comedies are movies you want to watch with company.

This is my written, formal plea to streaming services (hell, even cable) to please give me comedy movies for free. I am genuinely begging. My Letterboxd watchlist and I will thank you ardently.