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PROFILE: UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, STORRS, CT

This is one of a series of U.S. college and university profiles for 2011-12 and it will be continually updated as new information becomes available to prospective students and their families as well as the author. Statistics provided for this profile have been provided from a variety of sources, most notably the U.S. Department of Education and the school itself. Any use or reproduction of this profile without the expressed permission of the author is prohibited.

Background on the University of Connecticut

Founded in 1881 as the Storrs Agricultural School, the University of Connecticut (UConn) is New England's second-largest public university as well as the only federally supported Land, Sea and Space grant institution on the region. Located in a small state with several excellent privately-supported colleges and universities—Yale was actually the Nutmeg State's federal Land Grant institution until 1893—UConn was officially recognized as the state's research university in 1939.

While Storrs has been the location of the main campus since the university's agricultural roots, the university also has satellite campuses in Avery Point, Danbury, Hartford, Stamford and Torrington. The university's law school and graduate business school are based in Hartford, while UConn Health Center is based in Farmington, a suburb of Hartford and New Britain. Today UConn has approximately 17,300 undergraduates on the main campus and about 30,000 on all campuses. Another 6,000 students are enrolled in graduate programs at Storrs.

Since 1995 UConn has been the beneficiary of more than \$2 billion in public funding to construct or rebuild buildings on campus through two ambitious bond issues, "UConn 2000," was the first in 1995. The second, "21st Century UConn," passed the state legislature eight years later. Investments made in the main campus were followed by a tightening of academic standards, the hiring of new faculty, including distinguished professors recruited to fill endowed chairs, as well as an increase in the percentage of international students and out-of-state students on the main campus. Today 35 percent of UConn students come from other states and countries.

The investments made by donors, as well as the State of Connecticut, are significant not only in dollars but also as a commitment to building a top-performing flagship university in a state that has historically had a strong selection of privately supported institutions as well as a high out-migration (more than 50%) of college-bound freshmen to other states, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

The nation's wealthiest state in terms of median household income and per capita income, according to the 2010 Census, Connecticut has, in addition to Yale, three of the nation's best private liberal arts colleges: Connecticut College, Trinity College and Wesleyan University. The Nutmeg State also has two regional universities, Fairfield and Quinnipiac, that are on the cusp of excellence. These schools retain nearly 90% of their entering freshmen. Fairfield graduates more

than 80 percent of their freshmen within six years, Quinnipiac 74 percent. By comparison, New Jersey, which has almost two and one-half times the population of Connecticut (8.8 million vs. 3.6 million people), has only two private institutions, besides Princeton, that are close to achieving similar levels of excellence: Stevens Institute of Technology and Drew University.

Most important, UConn is one of the top performing public universities in the country, with a freshman retention rate of 93 percent and a six-year graduation rate of 81 percent. This performance puts UConn among the top three dozen public institutions in the country, ahead of better-endowed public schools such as Georgia Tech, Washington, Pittsburgh, Purdue, Ohio State, Texas A&M, Rutgers-New Brunswick and Michigan State, as well as privately-supported institutions such as the University of Miami and George Washington University.

In addition, approximately two-thirds of the students who entered in 2004 graduated within four-years, an excellent performance for any school—most do not graduate as high a percentage within six years—especially a very large one. This performance ranks ahead of Penn State-University Park, the University of Maryland-College Park, the University of Texas-Austin and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, among other leading flagship state universities.

UConn has marketed itself as the leading publicly supported university in New England. In terms of graduation rates, the UConn has the [best four-year graduation rate](#) among schools in that region, using data from College Results Online, a service managed by the Education Trust a non-partisan, non-profit education policy organization based in Washington D.C. The University of New Hampshire is the only other flagship school in the region with a four-year graduation rate exceeding 60 percent as well as a six-year graduation rate that has surpassed 75 percent.

Admissions

More than 22,000 students applied for 3,300 seats in the freshman class that entered in the fall of 2010. Of these applicants, 11,000 were from Connecticut residents; the rest came from out of state.

There were five applicants for every seat reserved for an in-state student and more than ten applied for each out-of-state seat. Among all applicants, about 12,000 were offered admission. Less than five percent, fewer than 600 students, were admitted off the waiting list. UConn's waiting list, however, was fairly large. Nearly 4,000 applicants were offered a place on the waiting list; thirty five percent accepted the offer. UConn does not offer an early decision option, but it does offer non-binding early action. The university accepts the Common Application. Students are not required to indicate a major when they apply, though they are encouraged to do so.

UConn's overall yield rate, the percentage of students who decided to come, was 26 percent, fairly low for a state university. This, combined with the large number of applicants placed on the waiting list, indicates that UConn was not the first choice of the students it truly wanted. In-state and out-of-state students are considered equally, says Nathan Fuerst, director of undergraduate admissions, though the average SAT scores of the out-of-state students have

been higher. Like most leading state universities, UConn considers academic rigor first, standardized test scores second, though the essay is important for ascertaining if an applicant has the qualities of a future UConn student, Fuerst adds.

An SAT Critical Reading score below 600 will not remove an student from consideration; half of the entering class in 2010 did not reach this score. However, a score below 550 will put an applicant in the bottom quarter of the pool, according to the university's most recent [Common Data set](#). More than two-thirds of all applicants scored 600 or better on the Math section of the test. The SAT range (Critical Reading and Math only) between the lowest 25 percent of the pool and the highest quarter was 1130 to 1310. Those who have grades and test scores that place them in the upper quarter are the most likely to qualify for merit-based aid and admission to the Honors Program. In the most recent class, slightly more than ten percent of the entering students were Honors students.

In state students typically cross-shop UConn against other private colleges in Connecticut as well as the regional public colleges, says Nathan Fuerst, and those students have been more likely to choose UConn. Out-of-state students consider their home state university, most often the University of Massachusetts-Amherst or Rutgers University-New Brunswick, as well as more selective private institutions. UConn is the [most selective public university in the New England region](#) using data available through the Education Trust. The university's freshman class also has a [higher set of median SAT scores](#) in Critical Reading and Math than the other flagship schools in the region.

Since 1955 UConn has also offered an Early College Experience (ECE) program for approximately 9,000 students in partnership with 150 Connecticut high schools. ECE offers 50 courses in 20 disciplines.. While not all ECE students choose to go on to UConn for college, an estimated 25 percent of entering UConn freshmen have taken a course through ECE.

Costs

In-state tuition and mandatory fees at U-Conn are approximately \$10,700, higher than average for a state university. However, aside from the University of Maine, [which charges about the same](#), UConn's charges are lower those of any flagship state university in New England. Out-of-state tuition and mandatory fees are approximately \$27,600, [about the same as the University of Maine-Orono](#), but [\\$2,200 higher than at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst](#). UConn also charges out-of-state students about the same as the [University of Delaware](#), though higher than the [University of Maryland-College Park](#) or [Rutgers University-New Brunswick](#).

While UConn is the least-cost option in Connecticut for students seeking a degree from a leading research university—Yale is the only other one—it is not the least-cost option in public education in the Netmeg State. The [Connecticut State University system](#) schools: Eastern, Southern, Western and Central, charge just over \$8,000 in tuition and mandatory fees, nearly \$3,000 less than UConn. However, none of these schools graduates even half of its freshmen within six years.

While UConn's tuition and fee charges might be competitive, room and board charges are not. At approximately \$11,500, they are higher than those at most state-supported universities in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states, excluding Rutgers-New Brunswick, [which charges about the same](#). Both UConn and Rutgers have made substantial investments in new housing since the latter half of the 1990s. A school that has a greater share of newer dormitory facilities in its housing stock, their costs covered through public bond issues, is likely to charge more for room and board than a school that extends the life cycle of older buildings or asks the majority of its students to live elsewhere.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's *College Navigator*, UConn has raised tuition and fees by an average of 5.5 percent for in-state and out-of-state students since 2007-2008. Room and board charges have risen by an average of 6.5 percent. The department's estimate of 2011-12 charges was \$300 less than the university trustees decided to charge. Total in-state tuition and fees for the next four years, beginning this year, were estimated to be just under \$48,000. Total out of state charges are estimated to be just under \$124,000. The department estimates that out-of-state tuition and fees are expected to exceed \$30,000 next year.

One other aspect of cost is net price, the total cost for a year of college, including room and board and incidentals, less scholarships and grants, which students do not need to repay. In 2009-10, the last year the Department of Education had data available, the Average Net Price for an in-state student at UConn was approximately \$14,500; this represented a 48 percent discount.

However, students in the higher income bracket are less likely to qualify for need-based aid. According to the same source, the average net price for a middle income family (\$75,001 through \$110,000) was about \$18,900, a 20 percent discount. Upper income families (over \$110,000) paid an average net price of approximately \$21,800, a discount of eight percent.

Net price information has more value when it can be compared against the willingness of other schools to discount in order to attract their best applicants, whether they be from in state or out of state.

School	2009-10 Average Net Price \$75,001 through \$110,000	2009-10 Average Net Price Over \$110,000
UConn (in-state)	\$18,900	\$21,800
Connecticut College	\$26,200	\$42,800
Fairfield Univ	\$27,500	\$37,800
Quinnipiac Univ	\$31,600	\$32,100
Sacred Heart Univ	\$28,500	\$33,300
Trinity College	\$23,500	\$40,000
Wesleyan Univ	\$24,200	\$40,600
Yale Univ	\$14,400	\$33,500

While UConn undercuts all but Yale in terms of affordability for a middle income in-state student, it is also a less expensive option for the upper income in-state students.

However, the estimated out-of-state charges for UConn in 2009-10 were approximately \$39,000. The average net price for upper income students was lower for all of the private schools listed above, excluding Connecticut College. But none of these schools is a national research university, excluding Yale. So, it makes sense to compare the out-of-state charges against popular privately- supported universities.

School	2009-10 Average Net Price \$75,001 through \$110,000	2009-10 Average Net Price Over \$110,000
Boston College	\$28,200	\$41,500
Boston Univ	\$30,200	\$40,400
Geo Washington	\$24,300	\$33,800
New York Univ	\$38,100	\$43,400
Northeastern	\$33,000	\$38,400
Syracuse Univ	\$26,100	\$37,800

The upper-income UConn applicant from out of state who might not qualify for financial aid could qualify at privately-supported institutions and pay less, depending on where they land in the applicant pool at each school. For example, a student with UConn's median SAT scores of 1220 might be in the third quarter of the pool at Syracuse, the top 50 to 75 percent, but not be in the same quartile at the other schools.

Another measure of costs is the debt-to-degree ratio. Developed by Education Sector, a non-partisan, non-profit public policy organization based in Washington DC, this ratio represents that average amount that a student must borrow in order to complete their degree. Students who attend schools that are noted for reasonable costs and/or financial aid as well as an excellent graduation rate typically borrow less than students who do not.

From 2006 through 2009, the debt to degree ratio for UConn graduates was approximately \$16,900. By comparison a Rutgers-New Brunswick graduate from New Jersey would borrow \$2,000 less. A University of Maryland graduate from Maryland would owe around \$5,000 less. However, UConn's debt-to-degree ratio was lower than for any school in the Connecticut State University System. It was also lower than the ratio for all but the most selective private schools in Connecticut: Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan and Yale. The debt-to-degree ratios for Boston College, Boston University and George Washington University, large private schools that compete with UConn for students, were lower as well.

[UConn's endowment](#), as of June, 2011, is approximately \$313 million, low for a state university system. By comparison, Trinity College, a top liberal arts college in Hartford that has 2,300 students, [has an endowment of nearly \\$380 million](#). However, UConn's endowment has gone up by approximately \$50 million since the close of fiscal year 2010. The university is in the midst of a capital campaign, Our University, Our Moment, [with a goal towards raising \\$600 million](#). The

development team [raised \\$50 million](#) towards the goal in fiscal year 2011, including a \$100,000 contribution from the university's president, Susan Herbst, and her husband, Douglas Hughes.

While the financial picture of the university is improving, it must be acknowledged that a small endowment leaves fewer resources for scholarships, faculty and facilities. Typically, a college or university spends no more than five percent of the market value of their endowment, aside from gifts committed to a specific purpose. A decline in the market value of an endowment is typically followed by tuition increases and/or budget cuts.

UConn does offer [scholarship programs](#) that are quite worthwhile, especially for Connecticut residents. In-state students may be nominated for Nutmeg Scholarships and Day of Pride Scholarships by their high school guidance counselors. Valedictorians may also be considered for a full-tuition Presidential Scholarship. In-state and out-of-state students may be considered for half-tuition Academic Excellence Scholarships and Leadership Scholarships. The university advises serious applicants to [apply for admission by December 1](#) to be considered for these awards.

With UConn being in a small, rural community, most employment during the school year must be on campus. As a result, more than 5,000 jobs, work-study and non- work-study, are available to help cover costs.

Curriculum

UConn divides general education requirements into two areas: Content and Competency. They may choose courses related to their school or major requirements to fulfill them. Aside from having to take three writing courses, these requirements are less cumbersome than those imposed by similar schools. Math courses are capped at 30 students, while English composition courses are capped at 19.

Students take two courses each in four Content areas: Arts and Humanities, Social Science, Science and Technology and Diversity and Multiculturalism. They also take courses in five Competency areas: The Writing (two or three courses), Quantitative Analysis (two courses) Competencies are tied to actual classes; the Computer Technology can be met by completing a series of online modules before the start of the freshman year. The Information Literacy Competency is developed through the introductory English Composition course as well as a First Year Experience seminar, a small-group class taught by a faculty or staff member. All students are also expected to have competency in a foreign language through the third year of high school or by passing the first and second semesters of the introductory language course.

Approximately one-third of entering freshmen arrive without a declared major, according to the Web site of the university's [Academic Center for Exploratory Students](#) (ACES). These students have either chosen to enter the university undecided about a major or they have been offered "second choice" admission after being denied admission to one of the more competitive schools within the university such as Engineering or Pharmacy. The ACES staff assists approximately 3,200 freshmen and sophomores into a transition into their desired school or a choice of major.

First Year Experience programs fall under three options: University Learning Skills, Learning Communities and Faculty-Student Seminars. The University Learning Skills courses involve 70 to 75 percent of a freshman class says Jim Hill, director of the Academic Center for Exploratory Students. These classes, which are taught by either faculty or staff, meet for an hour each week. Enrollment is capped at 19 students and each course has a student mentor to assist the instructor. These courses are a way to get to know the university and its resources and are designed to help new students adjust from high school to college. These courses cover such areas as time management, advising and career choices, campus resources and facilities, problem solving, study skills and technology. Sample assignments could include brief reflection papers that students write about events they attend that are outside of the personal experiences, their “comfort zone,” or letters of advice to incoming students. Faculty-Student seminars are courses around special topics that are conducted by faculty members. Course titles have included: *Developing the Counselor Within*, *Political Palm Reading* and *Environmental Sustainability*. One credit courses based around learning communities are offered to students who choose to live within a living-learning community on campus, though students who share interests with the community may also enroll in these courses.

While the ACES and First Year Experience programs have likely contributed to the university’s high freshman retention and graduation rates, the university’s Academic Achievement Center has been equally important. Focused on study skills, the center pairs students in need of assistance with peers, aka “survivors” classmates who had previously struggled with the same subject. The center is important not only for students who have had academic difficulties but also for students who want to perform better in their coursework, says Jim Hill.

While UConn encourages students to seek internships and provides support through the faculty and career services offices to assist them, the university does not make them a requirement across all majors. Nor does it require a research project or thesis as another option. Students may also opt for cooperative education which involves six months of paid full-time employment for credit. While participation in co-op may lengthen the amount of time required to complete a degree, it also helps students become well acquainted with a potential employer and may help improve their marketability. One recommendation: Enroll in co-op as a summer course, if possible, in order to graduate within four years.

With approximately 11,000 students, the College of Arts and Sciences has more than 60 percent of the undergraduate enrollment at UConn, according to the university’s Office of Institutional Research. The College of Engineering has about 2,000 students while the schools of Agriculture and Business have more than 1,500 each. Aside from undeclared or pre-professional students completing requirements to gain acceptance to a major, biological sciences and psychology are the most popular courses of study, each has more than 1,000 majors. Accounting, Allied Health Sciences, Communication Studies, Economics, English and Mechanical Engineering each have more than 400 students.

While employers aggressively seek the business, engineering, nursing and pharmacy majors, education is also a strong suit. While *U.S. News* rankings are highly criticized by educators, the magazine’s annual graduate school rankings showed that UConn’s Neag School of Education is

among the top 20 in the country. The school offers a highly structured five-year Bachelor's-Master's program to prepare students to teach in Connecticut schools.

UConn's student-faculty ratio, according to the university's [Common Data Set](#), is 18 to 1, based on counting of all of the full-time faculty as well as one-third of the part-time faculty. This ratio is similar to other flagship schools including the University of Maryland-College Park and the University of Texas-Austin.

Comforts

UConn houses three-quarters of its undergraduate student body on-campus, over 12,000 students, about the same number as the University of Maryland- College Park, which has 10,000 more students to house. The university offers more upper-class housing options—suite-style dorms living and apartments— than students will find at most other large state schools. In addition, unlike most comparable schools, all dorms are WiFi enabled. Microwave ovens and portable refrigerators are permitted in dorm rooms.

One recommendation when visiting UConn is to ask to see as many of the living options as possible. The university uses a model dorm room that, while in a dormitory building, is set aside from an actual dormitory floor. The model room is adjacent to a waiting area where prospective students may view photos, floor plans and listings for living-learning communities; it is reminiscent of a sales office for a new real estate development. The residence hall where the model room is located, McMahon Hall, is a good place to start. With two seven-story towers, McMahon is one of the larger and older dorms with a more traditional corridor-style lay-out as well as options to live on either co-ed and single-sex floors or in one of two learning communities. McMahon also has its own dining hall and is the home base for Husky Tech student computer repair services. While freshmen live in McMahon, they are also assigned to live in several other dorms throughout the campus.

Students may choose from 16 special interest or major program communities or be invited to live in Honors Housing. Approximately 40 percent of UConn freshmen reside in either honors or special interest housing, says Jim Hill. Learning communities are popular because they encourage students to bond around common interests. They also provide a support network to help new students succeed within a large university. Some of the special interest options, such as EcoHouse, are multi-disciplinary while others are focused around academic programs. Students are eligible to receive academic credit for academically-related projects or service projects that they undertake within a learning community.

UConn also constructed housing for fraternities and sororities; at other schools the national or local chapter built and owns the house. Aside from pledges who commit to these organizations, as well as members of learning and special interest communities, continuing students must enter a lottery to receive housing for the next academic year. Their chances to receive the housing they want are based on the number of credits accumulated; students on housing probation will not receive housing and those who already live off-campus are given a lower priority.

The university also provides students access to a secure off-campus housing database. Featured rentals ranged in price from \$875 per-month for a two-bedroom apartment to \$1,200 per-month for a one bedroom unit in a luxury apartment complex. While sharing an apartment might bring living costs down to a rent that becomes competitive with off-campus housing, a car is still necessary for grocery shopping, unless the apartment is close to campus. Otherwise, it may pay to opt for a meal plan, including Husky Bucks, to eat close to classes.

The wisest decision, given the myriad of housing options at UConn, is to live in on-campus housing. The surrounding area has few summer employment opportunities, including internships, beyond campus. It would not pay to commit to a year-long lease. In addition, the commute into Hartford and its environs for such positions would be prohibitively long and expensive for those who have access to a car.

Community

The UConn campus is only 20 minutes from Interstate 84 which run between Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Turnpike, which goes into Boston. However, access to the campus via a two-lane state highway, Route 195, makes the university appear more isolated than it really is. There is no retail shopping beyond small strip malls between the Storrs exit and Willimantic, which is 20 minutes past the UConn campus. Any major off-campus shopping spree requires access to a car.

The UConn campus is organized with academic buildings in the center, and the academic disciplines: Science and Technology, Business and Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages and Education, organized into quads. The campus is quite walkable and large maps with images of campus buildings appear frequently to keep anyone from getting lost. Dorms are located at the center of campus, as well as across Storrs Road, also known as Connecticut Highway 195, and the main road through campus. Dorms for students who opt for science and engineering majors are across from the science and engineering buildings. The campus has three ponds and considerable green space facing Storrs Road.

UConn, with the support of past state governors and the state legislature, has invested heavily in new construction. The Chemistry department, as one example, is housed in a modern classroom and laboratory building that resembles an old New England textile factory. The schools of business, education and engineering are all housed in modern buildings as well. Prospective students who visit this campus will find that UConn has some of the most attractive classroom buildings on any public university campus, including Gothic-style structures that date back to the earlier half of the 20th century. These buildings could just as easily be seen on an Ivy League campus such as Yale's. Campus planners have managed to successfully blend modern architecture with the older buildings. Even less attractive structures, aside from the former field house, now used as a recreation center, do not stand out as eyesores. For the most part the university has tried to repurpose older buildings instead of demolishing them.

The campus is amply lit, except for Eagle Rock Road, a main thoroughfare used by commuters, employees and visitors to enter the campus. This road is important because it provides the most direct route to parking for alumni events, programs at the Jorgenson Center and basketball games at the Gampel Pavilion, among other things. Unlike the walkways, this road does not have sufficient pedestrian level lighting. Electric walk/don't walk signs are needed to better coordinate auto and pedestrian traffic.

The university provides every eating and shopping opportunity, including the Dairy Bar (try the Husky Tracks or Jonathan Supreme) and Chuck and Augie's, a slightly upscale sit-down restaurant in the student center. The university also provides every entertainment opportunity from concerts and speakers at the Jorgenson Center for the Performing Arts to free movies and stand-up comedy. The annual spring weekend, which draws over 10,000 participants, including Oooz Ball, a volleyball tournament, played in mud pits. This weekend will be a smaller undertaking than it has been in previous years, in order to keep it contained to UConn students. High school students had come in the past.

The main campus profile has also been helped by the success of the men's and women's basketball programs as well as the football team. In 2004, both teams won national championships, the only time this has happened on a single university campus. In 2011, the men were national champions while the women were also in the Final Four. And while the UConn football program has played at a bowl-eligible level for only 12 seasons, the gridiron Huskies have won two Big East conference titles. Altogether, UConn has won 15 national championships: three in men's basketball, seven in women's basketball, three in men's soccer and two in women's field hockey.

Unlike most state universities, UConn plays none of its football games on campus and splits its basketball schedule between on and off campus venues. The current football stadium, Rentschler Field, is located in East Hartford, about 40 minutes from campus and seats 40,000. A stadium this size would have overwhelmed the campus community, which has only 9,000 residents outside of students. Gampel Pavilion, the on-campus basketball venue, has 10,000 seats. Only 21 years old, it is in excellent condition and a fine place to watch a game. However, Storrs is far off the more travelled paths for UConn alumni who still live in the state or in the Boston area, so men's and women's games against major opponents are played at the 14,000 seat XL Center in downtown Hartford. Gampel is also too small for major concert performers; their acts are more likely to be seen in Hartford, too.

While student can get football tickets easily, men's and women's basketball tickets are distributed through a lottery. While seniors have the best chance to win, even they are not assured tickets for games. Access to tickets is easier for alumni, who are offered a choice of packages for all games in Storrs and Hartford, or just the games played in one venue. However, like most successful sports programs, alumni must make financial contributions to get better seats.

UConn does not allow students to have cars until after they have accumulated 54 credits. Buses are available for travel into Boston, Hartford and New York as well as the nearby shopping mall.

The university also busses students to football games as well as the basketball games played in Hartford. It is also not uncommon for students to pay private property owners for parking. The advantage of a no-car policy for freshmen and sophomores is that they are less likely to leave campus. The downside is that Storrs does not have much in the way of off-campus amenities such as bars, restaurants or clubs that are popular spots in cities and other college towns.

Storrs is not a town, let alone a college town. It is an unincorporated community within Mansfield, a town with slightly more than 25,000 residents, excluding UConn students. While a fairly well-to-do area—the median household income is about the same as the median for the state—the local market had been too small to support a large retail base, until enrollment and employment increased at the university.

In 1999 UConn had approximately 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students, according to the university's Office of Institutional Research. By 2010, there were more than 23,000. The population of Mansfield also grew by more than 5,000 from 2000 through 2010 according to the U.S. Census. The university's ambitious building programs had helped to attract more students, and possibly more employees and faculty to live in the area. Today, as a result of this growth, the town and university have partnered with a private developer and financial institutions to *build a college town*.

The first phase in the building of the new college town, in this case a downtown, from the ground up involves the construction of luxury rental apartments atop of first floor retail space. Later phases will add more retail business as well. However, the dynamics of this project are not the same as those of a college town that has thrived for several decades.

College towns are not noted for modern architecture or for luxury apartment rentals, even those marketed to students, above new retail stores. In a college town such as Madison, Wisconsin or Chapel Hill, North Carolina, residential, office and retail uses are separated, though they may be neighbors side by side. It is also difficult to market luxury apartments to working adults when they are located close to student dormitories, as these will be. Rents for the apartments under construction range from \$1,000 per month for a studio to \$2,200 per month for a two-bedroom unit.

College towns are noted for local entrepreneurs especially comedy and music clubs, bars and restaurants, including ethnic foods not sold on campus, that are unique to the community. Retail or restaurant space in the new development across from UConn will likely be too expensive to attract them. As one example, a comic and used book store located in a strip shopping center that is slated to be demolished for the next phase of the project was served with an eviction notice.

In most college towns around a larger university, the university opens a second book store to help extend the campus brand. However, the UConn Co-op, the university's store, is within 10 to 15 minutes walking distance from the planned new downtown. That store already sells sundry goods to help students in their daily life as well as decorate their living space. But sundry stores, a pharmacy, for example, or a UConn theme store, make more sense on the first floor of a

luxury apartment building than bars or high-traffic restaurants. They're less noisy uses and do not bring attract mice or roaches to the residences above.

In addition, there will be the question of whether a state university should be a financial partner in a development where bars and restaurants would be in a visible position to sell alcoholic beverages to students under 21. However, such establishments are necessary to entice *adults* to spend time and money downtown, especially UConn alumni. UConn has built a very attractive Alumni House, located conveniently near the university foundation offices, the Jorgenson Center, a modern parking structure and the Gampel Pavilion. The Alumni House also hosts the university's All-Sports Museum. But these facilities are all a ten to fifteen minute walk from the proposed college town.

College towns also work well when the university's revenue sports programs are successful. While this has been true more often than not for UConn, the entire home football schedule and half of the men's and women's basketball schedules are not played on campus. Between the men's and women's teams there are enough basketball games on campus to attract fans into the college town during the spring, if you can get them to walk there before and after the game.

Drug and liquor-related violations are the most common campus crimes, according to the university's [most recent Clery Report](#). Reported and verified liquor-related violations dropped by nearly 50 percent, from 171 to 92, from 2008 through 2009. Reported and verifiable drug-related incidents dropped by more than half from 233 to 126. Burglaries have dropped as well; there were only 25 reported in 2009.

However, the volume of unverified liquor-related violations reported to police has been very high, considering the rural nature of the campus. In 2007 over 900 such offenses were reported. While this dropped to fewer than 800 two years later, the volume is high due to the compactness of the campus—that makes it easier for police to patrol and make the arrests—and the lack of bars and clubs within walking distance.

Connections

UConn has more than 225,000 living alumni. Fifty five percent live in Connecticut; the next largest concentrations live in the New York and Boston metro areas. Alumni tend to move from these areas back to Connecticut, says Lisa Lewis, executive director of the university's alumni association, after they plan to raise their families.

Excluding international alumni, UConn's alumni association has 50 charter groups organized by school and college, common interests, and former places of residence on campus. Two campus cultural centers, for African American and Asian students have their own alumni counsels. UConn has also operated a Student-Alumni Association for 28 years. The major marketing: Students Today, Huskies Forever.

The alumni association is a 12,000 member dues-based organization, though they serve all alumni at events on and off campus. They also operate a 600-member online mentoring

network to assist students as well as the Husky Alumni Network, an online community for alumni to search jobs, post notes and interact in a secure, private setting. They also provide career-oriented content, including four industry-focused Webinars, to all alumni, as well as podcasts of featured speakers who have appeared on campus. Students will soon be able to keep their UConn e-mail address after they graduate. There are 20,000 alumni across social media groups in Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The university's communications office also produces an excellent print magazine three times a year.

While UConn is not a school with many campus-wide traditions, the success of the football team and the men's and women's basketball teams has helped build strong emotional ties to the school. Fans at basketball games are especially passionate (Full disclosure: the author has seen several UConn basketball games over the last eight years) and remain standing until their Huskies have scored their first basket. With no professional teams in the state, aside from a women's basketball team that plays during the summer, the Huskies are Connecticut's Team. Watch parties are very easy to organize when the teams are so successful. There is even a "UConn bar" in New York City, adds Lisa Lewis.

According to the 2012 *U.S. News* college guide, UConn has an alumni giving rate of 17 percent, tied with Syracuse for fourth among the 16 basketball and football schools in the Big East, behind Notre Dame, Georgetown and Villanova, all private schools. UConn's alumni giving rate is also higher than the rates of other top-performing public schools that have had a longer history of success in sports, including Ohio State (15 percent), the University of California-Berkeley (12 percent), UCLA (13 percent) and the University of Michigan (15 percent).

Located in the university's modern Undergraduate Studies building, the university's career center works with students from the freshman year onward, beginning with a partnership with the university's Office of First-Year Programs. Counselors work with instructors on a resume assignment that is incorporated into each first-year seminar.

Over a quarter of the class begins to develop their resume during their freshman year, says Nancy Bilmes, associate director of career services. "These students learn to develop the skill of writing a resume. They use it to remember the activities they participated in as freshmen as well as to apply for resident assistant positions (in the dorms) or other on-campus opportunities. The resume is also a development tool, as students see that their high school grades and experience becomes less relevant as they advance through college," she adds. "The resume helps them plan their extracurricular activities as well as future employment."

While School of Business operates its own career center, the main career services partners with them on events and programs and also assists undecided students in choosing a major. They also administer Husky Career Link, the university's main job board as well as five real-time career fairs and a law school fair. The largest career fair, in terms of employer participation, is the Fall Career Fair, which takes place on campus. This past fall the event attracted 108 employers.



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Another event, held in late February, Careers for the Common Good, is a partnership with community outreach offices on campus. Targeted at students interested in socially responsible organizations in areas such as philanthropy and sustainability, this event attracted 37 employers last year. Career Expeditions, where small groups of students are brought to employers such as The Connecticut Department of Children and Families and the state legislature is another program to assist students interested in careers in public and non-profit organizations.

Other job-related events include the Big East Career Fair in New York City, a partnership among the schools that play in the same sports conference, the Internship/Co-op Fair and a Just-In-Time fair held closer to the end of the spring semester. UConn also participates in an online Big East Virtual Career Fair.

In addition to career fairs, 144 companies conducted nearly 1200 interviews on campus during the 2010-11 school year, while Husky Career Link has over 5,700 registered employers with over 7,400 company contacts. Counselors handled more than 9,100 appointments, including more than 3,000 resume critiques. About 2,200 students participate in workshops and presentations.

Alumni who have been out of school for three years or less may use all career services, including on-campus recruiting and participate in all events. Afterwards, alumni may receive a complimentary appointment, and participate in career-related programs and services run by the Alumni Association.

The [size of UConn's graduating classes](#) has grown while the UConn brand has ascended. In 2002, there were about 2,900 graduating seniors on the main campus. By 2009 there were just over 4,600. However, even as the size of the classes grew, the percentage who decided to continue their education has [remained consistently around 30 percent](#). In 2008, more than three-quarters of the students who sought a job found full-time work in a weakening economy, according to the university's Office of Institutional Research. The following year cannot be considered representative, as the more grim economic announcements came out after the class of 2009 began classes in the fall of 2008.

Conclusion

UConn is more accommodating to undergraduate student life than most large flagship state schools. The university provides practically every amenity, from the Dairy Bar to Husky Tech that students could want, except for places to go drinking. The student services are quite comprehensive, especially academic counseling, residence life and career services. In addition, the campus is more navigable and pedestrian friendly than those at larger state schools such as Penn State or Rutgers-New Brunswick.

While the senior administrators at all flagship schools believe that the "academic brand" comes first, the reality at UConn is that community spirit and pride are channeled through the success of the athletic program, first in men's and women's basketball, then in football, soccer, baseball and field hockey. These, by far, are the strongest connections that alumni have with their alma mater. They are equaled by few U.S. state schools. Only Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, and



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until recently, UCLA, have been more consistent winners among the flagship state schools that play men's basketball at the highest level. Tennessee has been the only other dominant public power in the women's game. There can be no doubt that Husky Pride has helped fundraising for academic as well as athletic purposes.

Even [recent sanctions](#) imposed by the NCAA against the men's basketball program are not likely to dissuade students or alumni from cheering the Huskies on during the regular season. However, they will compromise the team's ability to recruit new talent; [the program is on probation](#) from post-season play through until the fall of 2014. The Husky brand is so strong that the UConn men will be featured on 14 nationally televised games on either CBS or ESPN this season, even though the team will be ineligible for post-season play. However, the mood on campus during March Madness is not likely to change. The women's basketball program is more successful than the men's. They have more championship rings as well as a higher graduation rate.

While UConn is rightfully proud of its *U.S. News* ranking and the gains in student success that have helped make it possible—the university broke into the top 20 in 2011—the efforts to build an attractive and more livable campus community as well as the Husky brand have become far more memorable, and they're quite significant. They entice people to come to UConn and thrive in an isolated place, and they make alumni glad that they did.

REPORT CARD: UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Costs: B 12 Points

Pluses

In state tuition and fees are low for a New England state university

Residents of other New England states may receive discounted tuition and fees if they gain acceptance to a degree program that is not offered by their home state university

Aggressive capital campaign has raised the endowment following two successful state bonds issues

Minuses

Second-highest out-of-state tuition and fees, room and board costs of any school in New England after the University of Vermont. The rates are also high compared to other flagships such as Delaware, Maryland and Rutgers-New Brunswick

Small endowment for a large state university

Limited merit-based aid programs compared with other leading flagship state universities

Comforts: A 20 Points

Pluses

Three quarters of the student body may be housed on-campus

Aggressive efforts to construct new residences

More housing options than most state universities

Even fraternities and sororities have modern homes

Minuses

Off-campus housing not worth the money or added expenses and work around a year-long lease

Community: B+ 16 points

Pluses

Campus has every amenity students could possibly want, aside from a home football stadium and places to drink

Ample opportunities for recreation and serenity
Navigable, well-designed and well-marked campus
Excellent and well-located facilities to welcome alumni
Winning sports program—15 national championships
Strong Husky brand identity
University arranges transit options to Hartford, including the train station and airport, to help out-of-state students get home during breaks and holidays
Minuses
Campus is quite isolated for a flagship school
Storrs-Mansfield is not a college town
Potential of proposed new college-focused “downtown” is questionable
Eagle Rock Road could be better lit—main thoroughfare for visitors
Football games and major basketball games are not played on campus
No-car rule is difficult to enforce on such an isolated campus. Only well-to-do students can pay to park nearby and drive anywhere
Curriculum: A 20 points
Pluses
General Education requirements less cumbersome than at most flagship schools
Options for co-op, internship and research-focused scholarship are same as other leading schools, though not forced upon all students
Career development is brought into the First Year Experience courses
Aggressive initiatives at student success have been priorities of past two university presidents
About one quarter of entering freshmen have already taken at least one course at UConn through the Early College Experience program
Minuses
Not as highly recognized as a research university as schools like Maryland, Penn State or Rutgers



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Internships and co-ops require more careful planning, since the campus is not in close proximity to major employers
Connections: A 20 points
Pluses
One of the strongest brand identities of any state university in the U.S.
Large alumni base employed in the Boston and New York metro areas
Attractive and accessible Alumni House with All-Sports Museum
Home football and major basketball games scheduled in Hartford area with alumni in mind
Resourceful, well managed career development center
Generous career services benefits to young alumni less than three years out of school
Strong student-alumni organization
Excellent in-person and online career-related programs for alumni
Minuses
Alumni Association is a dues-based association
Difficult to bring alumni back to an isolated campus that has limited parking
TOTAL SCORE: 88 points