

# Academic Affairs UPDATE



May 15, 2026



## INSIGHTS

### From the Interim Provost

Over the course of several Commencement ceremonies this past weekend, [more than 9,000 UConn students received their degrees](#), and our School of Law graduates will be recognized this weekend. On Monday evening, I joined colleagues on the graduate faculty in recognizing the 649 students who earned Ph.D. degrees — the culmination of years of sustained intellectual work, persistence, and support.

I was especially proud to see my student Serzat Safaltin receive his Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering. Every doctoral graduate reflects not only individual achievement, but also the commitment of advisors, committee members, staff, families, and peers who help carry that work forward over many years. Our students leave UConn prepared to contribute to their fields and communities in meaningful ways, and their successes become part of the university's broader impact on the world.

These impacts are evident in the work of our alumni. I was recently privileged to meet with Maj. Gen. Francis J. Evon Jr. '89 (BUS), adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard. In overseeing Connecticut's Army and Air Guard operations, he is responsible for both state emergency response and national readiness. He spoke about the role UConn, and the ROTC program in particular, played in preparing him for a lifetime of leadership and service. It was a reminder that the impact a UConn education is often felt over decades.

Over the past several weeks, I have continued meeting with colleagues across the university: academic deans discussing budget planning and the progress of the budget transformation initiative; department heads and associate deans reviewing the upcoming changes in the AAUP, UCPEA, and GEU-UAW contracts; and faculty and staff in the School of Business as we plan for the search for their next dean. These conversations are detailed, sometimes difficult, but essential to the work of the coming academic year.

Yesterday, I joined Governor Lamont, President Maric, members of the General Assembly, university leadership, and colleagues from across our research community at Science 1 for the [announcement of \\$35 million in state support for UConn and UConn Health](#) research programs affected by recent federal funding cuts.

I want to thank Governor Lamont and our legislative partners for their investment to our university. At a moment of considerable uncertainty for research institutions nationwide, the State of Connecticut made a clear statement about the value of public higher education and the importance of sustaining research that serves our communities. This funding will help preserve critical research programs, protect jobs, and support work that directly impacts vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, individuals in crisis and recovery, and older adults. It is an important investment both in UConn and UConn Health and in Connecticut's communities.

Summer rarely means stillness at a university, but it does offer time to reset. Whether you spend the coming months in laboratories, classrooms, offices, archives, conference rooms, or on long-delayed vacations, I hope you find time for both productive work and genuine rest.

With best regards,

Pamir Alpay  
Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

## NEWS

### 2026 Promotion and Tenure Announcements

Promotion and tenure mark an important milestone in a faculty member's academic career and recognize sustained contributions to scholarship, teaching, mentorship, and service. This year's cohort includes faculty whose work is advancing discovery, preparing students for success, and strengthening UConn's academic excellence across disciplines and campuses. [View the full list of faculty receiving promotion and tenure for 2026.](#)



### Honorary Degree Recipients Inspire New Graduates

Conferral of honorary degrees recognizes individuals whose work has made a lasting impact in their professions, communities, and the world. [This year's recipients](#) included leaders in public service, business, science, the arts, and healthcare whose accomplishments speak to the values UConn seeks to instill in its graduates: innovation, service, leadership, and a commitment to improving the world.

Honorary degree recipients, distinguished alumni, and other leaders addressed graduates across the commencement ceremonies, offering examples of service, innovation, creativity, and public impact. Commencement celebrated their extraordinary achievements and offered graduates an opportunity to be inspired by individuals whose careers have shaped industries, advanced knowledge, and influenced countless lives.



### Provost's Awards for Excellence in Community Engaged Scholarship Announced

The 2026 Provost's Awards for Excellence in Community-Engaged Scholarship (PAECES) recognize faculty, students, teams, and programs whose work advances community impact through research, teaching, and service. This year's honorees include undergraduate student Andy Zhang '26; faculty members Amit Savkar, Na Zhang, Mohamad Alkady, Sukhmani Singh, and Mayra Rodríguez González; UConn Waterbury for Institutional Transformation; and the Total Teacher Health team at UConn Health and the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Partnership Team. Learn more about the [2026 Provost's Awards for Excellence in Community-Engaged Scholarship recipients](#) and their work in communities across Connecticut and beyond.



### Kumar Venkitanarayanan Named Dean of CAHNR

Following a national search, Dr. Kumar Venkitanarayanan has been appointed Dean of UConn's College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR) and Director of the Connecticut Cooperative Extension System and the Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, effective July 1. A respected member of the UConn community for more than 27 years, Dr. Venkitanarayanan has held several leadership roles within CAHNR, including Interim Dean, Senior Associate Dean, and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education. During his time as Interim Dean, he strengthened the College's teaching, research, and outreach efforts, expanded fundraising and graduate student support, and advanced interdisciplinary collaboration across the University and with external partners. An accomplished food safety scholar and dedicated educator, he has authored more than 140 peer-reviewed publications and secured more than \$18 million in competitive research funding throughout his career.

## UPDATES

### CETL Leadership Update

Dr. Gwen Athene Tarbox, Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), will be leaving UConn this summer to assume the role of Director of Scholarly Teaching within the Center for Integrated Professional Development at Illinois State University.

We are grateful for Gwen's leadership, collegiality, and commitment to excellence in teaching and learning at UConn, and we wish her continued success in this next chapter. We will share additional information about the future leadership and direction of CETL as plans are finalized.

## DATES and DEADLINES

### AY 26-27 PTR Timeline and Resources Available

PTR resources, including the timeline, can be accessed by UConn faculty using this link: <https://provost.uconn.edu/promotion-tenure-reappointment/>

### Faculty Consulting Reminder

**Please Submit New Requests for the Reporting Year That Begins May 23, 2026**

The reporting year for faculty consulting ends on May 22, in alignment with the 9-month faculty contract. If you have ongoing consulting work that will continue from FY26 into FY27, this requires a new consulting request to cover the new reporting year. Consulting work done over the summer (May 23 - August 23) still requires approval.

Prior approval through the online request system is required before beginning any activity. All paid activities related to your professional expertise (including grant reviews, talks, and similar academic activities), and unpaid work with faculty affiliated companies, fall within the faculty consulting policy.

Consulting requests can be reconciled at any time after an activity is completed, or after the end of the reporting year. In late August, a reminder will be sent for any approved consulting activities approved for the current year (FY26) that have not been reconciled. You do not have to wait for these REMINDERS to reconcile your requests.

For more information on the consulting policy, and instructions on how to submit or reconcile requests, please visit [our website](#).

For more information, contact: Faculty Consulting Office at [fc@uconn.edu](mailto:fc@uconn.edu)

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