



UCONN

GRADUATE
EMPLOYEE &
POSTDOC
UNION

GEU-UAW LOCAL 6950

To students and workers at UConn and across Connecticut:

We, GEU-UAW Local 6950, the labor union of graduate and postdoctoral workers at the University of Connecticut, find it urgent to express our deep concern about the codification of new University policies restricting the speech, expression, and assembly of students and employees at UConn. We see these changes as a punitive response to student protests; an escalation of the biased repression of Palestinian and pro-Palestinian community members; and an attack on the free speech and right to protest of our entire UConn community—including the labor movement. We demand that the UConn administration retract these policies. Free speech and the right to protest must be respected everywhere, especially at public universities such as ours.

Between April 25th and April 30th, student activists engaged in a protest of the State of Israel's genocide of Palestinians, demanding that UConn divest from and cut ties with the industries that are profiting off the killing of tens of thousands. The protest was an educative, multicultural, multi-faith gathering and a testament to the commitment of our community to a world free from colonialism, racism, and war. Rather than engage with the students' cries to end the complicity of their university in the violence, UConn's administration responded with an aggressive police mobilization, arresting 26 protesters on charges of trespassing. We reiterate our earlier condemnation of these arrests and call on the university to ask the State's Attorney to drop the charges.

Over the summer, the UConn administration revised university codes of conduct to include new restrictions on amplified sound, outdoor gatherings, and poster and flyer use. While a dean sent a recent email aiming to impress on all graduate students that, "First and foremost, you are a student," it is incumbent on us to remind the University *that we are also organized workers in the labor movement*, employees who insist on the direct connection between our working conditions and the learning conditions of our students and ourselves. The arrest of student demonstrators and anti-speech policies directly and negatively impact our work.

In line with [larger nationwide efforts](#) to repress protest and chill free speech on campus, there have been five identified policies targeting speech, protest, organization of events, and disciplinary measures strengthening enforcement due to recent activism and organizing. For example, the [Amplified and Projected Sound policy](#) was changed effective August 21st, 2024 to prohibit Amplified and Projected Sound during work hours, while exempting events and activities sponsored by the President, Provost, or Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment; the [Outdoor Activities Policy](#) was changed effective August 21st, 2024 which allows the university to decide which outdoor activities to prioritize and empowers the university to force one to relocate. The [General Rules of Conduct](#) were changed effective February 29th, 2024 to prohibit employees from "engaging in activities which are detrimental to the best interests of the University or the State." New restrictions on [flyering and poster use](#) impose limits on student and worker speech. We have seen in the past how these policies disproportionately impact pro-Palestinian demonstrators and place undue burden on them through lengthy and unnecessary disciplinary processes.

← Policy Change Statement

administrators. While it is obvious that these changes are a response to the anti-genocide protests of April 2024, we, organized workers at this university, understand that these rules are intended to have a chilling effect on *all* campus organizing, including the labor movement and our fight for worker rights.

During a time when UConn is unapologetically engaging in budget cuts that threaten the livelihood and quality of life of graduate students, faculty, and staff on campus, UConn continues to heavily invest in the policing and surveillance of our community at the cost of investing in education. UConn spent \$67,168 in police overtime alone to surveil and intimidate the brave student demonstrators and, based on the passage of these policies, only plans to escalate punishment, surveillance, and repression. We see the repression of free speech and expansion of police power as an attack on the right of all students and workers to engage as civic-minded and politically-aware community members.

In dark times such as these, the labor movement must be the first line of defense of civil liberties. We call on other unions on campus, all student constituencies, and labor unions and progressive organizations across Connecticut and the country to demand that these policies be retracted and fight for our right to protest and organize at UConn and beyond.

In Solidarity,

GEU-UAW Local 6950

Policies Referenced:

- Amplified Sound Policy: <https://policy.uconn.edu/2011/05/24/speakers-forum-and-outdoor-amplification/>
- Outdoor Activity Policy: <https://policy.uconn.edu/2024/08/21/outdoor-activities-policy/>
- Student Code of Conduct (Strengthened Enforcement Mechanisms) <https://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code/the-student-code-pdf/>
- General Rules of Conduct: “detrimental to the best interests of the University or the State” <https://policy.uconn.edu/2011/05/24/general-rules-of-conduct/>
- Restrictions on Posted Signs: Posting Policy <https://policy.uconn.edu/2024/06/28/posting-policy/>