SIERRA CLUB
CONNECTICUT

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November 14, 2019

Thomas C. Katsouleas
President
University of Connecticut
352 Mansfield Road
Storrs, CT 06269-1048

Dear President Katsouleas,

On behalf of Sierra Club Connecticut and our 50,000 members and supporters, I am writing to support the student-led movement at UCONN urging you to reject fossil fuel expansion on campus.

UCONN has been recognized by Sierra Magazine as a top "Coolest Schools" based on the commitment that UCONN is making to uphold high environmental standards. The University ranked 5th in 2019, and 3rd in 2018. We applaud the significant efforts that UCONN has made including a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, LEED Gold Certification in new buildings, composting campus agricultural waste, siting solar on campus, and implementing an environmental literacy general education requirement, among other efforts.

The temporary halt to the Supplemental Utility Plant and the creation of committees on sustainability are laudable responses to the concerns of the students. But, science is very clearly telling us that we must reduce, not expand, fossil fuel usage to address climate change. **We urge you to put a permanent halt on the construction of the fracked gas Supplemental Utility Plant and to stop Phase 1 plans to install a chilled water gas boiler and diesel back up to serve the new Northwest Science Quad.[1] Instead, UCONN should adopt a sustainable approach that will use renewable generation, battery storage, and renewable thermal technology.**

Expanding the use of fracked gas, and creating more greenhouse gas emissions, is not consistent with what science is recommending, or with UCONN's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050. Fracked gas is 97 percent methane, the second most common greenhouse gas and the most destructive in the short term. Over the first five years, methane is 80 to 100 times stronger than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. Research from Robert

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1 https://updc.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1525/2019/06/Final_Record_of_Decision_UConn_NWSQ_April2019.pdf

Howarth at Cornell University[2] shows that the increase in methane from fracking is speeding global warming. Howarth has stated that "Reducing methane now can provide an instant way to slow global warming and meet the United Nations' target of keeping the planet well below a 2-degree Celsius average rise." Howarth says that "If we can stop pouring methane into the atmosphere, it will dissipate. It goes away pretty quickly, compared to carbon dioxide. It's the low-hanging fruit to slow global warming." [3]

Just last week, over 11,000 scientists outlined crucial steps to address the planet's climate emergency. Among the top recommendations of their report is a call to "promptly reduce the emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, including methane."[4]

Please reject fossil fuel expansion and adopt renewables for this and future projects. Such an approach creates clean energy jobs, is better for the environment and for the health of the community, and aligns with scientific recommendations for addressing climate change. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Samantha Dynowski

Samantha Dynowski, State Director
Sierra Club Connecticut

Cc:
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[2] https://www.biogeosciences.net/16/3033/2019/
[3] https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2019/08/study-fracking-prompts-global-spike-atmospheric-methane
[4] https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/biz088/5610806?searchresult=1

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