

**UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF THE STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE  
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
STORRS CAMPUS, WILBUR CROSS NORTH READING ROOM  
233 GLENBROOK ROAD, STORRS, CT**

**February 26, 2020**

In Attendance:

Chairman Daniel Toscano  
Trustee Philip Rubin  
Trustee Shari Cantor  
Trustee Andrea Dennis-LaVigne  
Trustee Justin Fang  
Trustee Bryan Pollard  
Trustee Nandan Tumu

Others in Attendance:

President Thomas Katsouleas  
Joe Briody, Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of Student Activities  
Elly Daugherty, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students  
Cathy Downs, Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Michael Gilbert, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Dean Nina Rovinelli Heller, School of Social Work  
Suzanne Onorato, Executive Director of SHaW  
UConn Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Call to Order:

Trustee Cantor called the meeting of the Student Life Committee to order at 1:30 p.m. Trustee Cantor called for a motion to push all other agenda items to later in the meeting so that the Mental Health Discussion take place. Motion made by Trustee Tumu, seconded by Trustee Fang, the Student Life Committee unanimously voted to begin with the Mental Health discussion.

Mental Health Discussion:

Elly Daugherty shared that the University is working on a plan of next steps to continue with the suggestions and questions raised by the students. We need to continue to answer and keep addressing these issues. Both Storrs and the regional campuses are important. Dean Heller was very moved by the presentations and knew it was difficult to share. The safety, health, and well-being of all students is our number one priority. President Katsouleas has created a Presidential Task Force on Mental Health and Elly Daugherty and Dean Heller will co-chair this important Committee. Students, staff, faculty, and scholars in the area will all serve on this Committee.

This is a new initiative of the University but not a new concern for the University. Anxiety and depression are concerns of college students. Counseling had 21,000 appointments over the course of the year. To hear students are not feeling welcome and needs are not being met is upsetting. The scheduling process and how we triage and the depth of need might require an on-line interface to schedule appointments and other ways of communicating with you. UConn has a deep culture of compassion and care for our students. UConn HELPS training will continue but it is not your responsibility as students. Keeling will be on Campus to conduct a full review of Counseling and student sessions will be held to gather input.

Dean Heller is honored and humbled to work on this initiative, and I was impacted by the bravery and honesty of your stories. I welcome the partnership with students on this Mental Health Task Force. The School of Social Work is on the Hartford Campus so I share regional background and I am ready to serve our students and colleagues.

The Student Mental Health Coalition will work with the Mental Health Task Force and will hold listening sessions and collaborate on the scope of that outreach. Task Force members have not been assigned yet and regional campuses will be invited as well.

Student Remarks:

How suicide is evaluated through Mental Health services? It is very poorly organized. Policies related to student deaths and not offering the appropriate support to students after a student death. There is no public policy for this. The DOSO does not release cause of death and no resources are offered after a death. Mental Health Services does not take all insurances and more resources need to be available. Where do we turn for help? Thank you for coming and listening to our concerns.

More needs to be done on mental health. Need more hands on with CMHS: only two therapists speak Spanish, only one Chinese, lack of diversity in CMHS staff, people of color have different issues. Hard to speak to someone that does not understand his or her background. The DOSO is a great resource, but it is up to professors in the end if you are not feeling well to give you the excused absence.

The Humphrey Clinic that was closed in 2018 due to budget constraints. The Humphrey Clinic would see individuals for \$5-\$15 per session and served undergraduate and graduate students. UConn needs to offer services that do not go through insurance. Mental health in African American women is not recognized as a sign of their culture. Counsellors need to understand individual struggles.

The culture needs to change. We need more institutional and financial change. Provided a handout on some research conducted regarding Costs of Suicide; Cost of Mental Illness, and Cost of Hiring (see attached). Thank you for listening to this topic; it is a very hard topic.

Can UConn collaborate with religious communities on campus for involvement and help with students as a place to go and talk?

Thank you for listening to our voices. What about the students that could not be here today, they also need to be acknowledged. Credit to the progressive step and smaller steps for immediate action. We need to make everything more transparent. We cannot put a price on someone's life.

Students have to take classes, can we put resources on every syllabus on mental health/loneliness and where to go if you have any issues. Professors and TAs need to be trained on what to look for and need to know they can talk to their students.

Once a referral is submitted on a student of concern, it is gone, not sure where it is. What is the real scope of suicide at UConn? We have no idea. There is clearly a gap somewhere on what is being offered to students after a suicide? There also is an over reliance on consultants to come in and fix our problems.

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Trustee Cantor was surprised at some comments on lack of service and response. I have been on the Board of Trustees for 6 years and challenges we face – societal and structural pressures are at an all-time high. Social media, opioids, etc. complicate and accelerate all of this. It is a crisis and I am disappointed you did not get more support for mental health. What can we do now short-term while other things are in the pipeline. The support needs to come from everyone.

- Commitment. We are here to work together; everything should be communicated with this group.
- Better training for sexual harassment; more follow-up on issues.
- More therapists and mental health care.
- More reading days so students can take care of themselves.
- Representation from all students, not just USG.
- CARE training for faculty and staff
- More funding
- Reprioritize
- Outreach to international Students; outreach to cultural centers, etc.
- Humanizing administrators; they are very cold
- Accessibility and transparency. It is about institutional culture and UConn's culture. CMHS is not accessible at UConn; we do not know about the resources; there is no communication; we do not know until it is too late.
- 24/7 therapy possible? Virtual; increased promotion university wide; outreach to first year courses integrated education through student leaders; need for financing and prioritization; establishment of relationships.

- Staff and faculty need permission to be human with students; needs to be part of our conversation/perspective.
- Start a buddy system where seniors pair up with freshmen
- Need an organization that talks to different groups about healthy stress practices and mental health resources.
- No funding for professional staff at cultural centers. Actions speak louder than words, neglect mental health for so long; mental health will continue and needs to be recognized as a sickness.
- Common attitude among students is you cannot help somebody if you cannot help yourself.

**Short-Term Goals:**

- Working with JED now
- Suzanne and Elly working with the UConn Mental Health Coalition to answer their questions (see attached list of questions). Look to other populations as well for the Task Force.
- Students who are isolated will need to be most reviewed for mental health and public health. We have many students who are feeling very lonely.
- Create a culture that works to be allies with students; create next generation administrators; reevaluate what they prioritize.
- We need you to help create the institution that we want.
- Meetings with students and Keeling once dates are set, the will be shared.

**Review and Approval of Minutes:**

On a motion from Trustee Cantor, seconded by Trustee Pollard, the Student Life Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 23, 2019.

**Chairperson's Report:**

Shari Cantor thanked the students for sharing their stories at the Board of Trustee meeting earlier and for being with us at the Student Life Committee meeting today. Our Committee has had several reports from departments that relate to student life and student services, which include a lot of data and numbers, not personal stories that were shared with the Board earlier and with the Student Life Committee.

**Student Trustees Report:**

Student Trustee Fang reported that he has been talking with graduate students about mental health issues and would like graduate students to be invited to serve on the Mental Health Coalition Task Force. Trustee Tumu has been working with students on mental health. He attended the HuskyThon held this past weekend for the first time and felt it was a wonderful experience.

**Vice President for Student Affairs Report:**

Deferred to Mental Health discussion.

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Constitution Updates:  
Tabled for April meeting.

Updates:

*Food Insecurity:* Elly gave an update on the Food Insecurity Report submitted to the members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on behalf of the Board of Trustees. Elly also outlined the UConn Swipes program that is utilized for students in need and the Students First Fund awarding Community Meal Plans to students in need.

*Climate Change Activism:* Scott Jordan can talk more about this topic at a future meeting. A Task Force has been formed.

*Diversity and Inclusion:* The final Committee is comprised of students, staff, administrators, professors as well as several Board of Trustee members.

Adjournment:

The meeting of the Student Life Committee ADJOURNED at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully,

Cathy Downs  
Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs