

**UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF THE STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE
TELEPHONE MEETING**

OCTOBER 27, 2021

Committee Membership:

Trustee Shari Cantor
Trustee Andrea Dennis-LaVigne
Trustee Justin Fang
Trustee Noah Frank
Trustee Bryan Pollard

Other Trustee Participants:

Trustee Daniel Toscano

University Senate Representative:

Jaci Van Heest

University Staff Participants:

Interim President Andy Agwunobi
Michael Gilbert, Vice President for Student Affairs
Joseph Briody, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Executive Director of Student Activities
Eleanor Daugherty, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
Cathy Downs, Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs
Krista O'Brien, Associate Director of Student Activities and Director of Trustee Student Organization Support
Rachel Rubin, Executive Secretary to the Board of Trustees

University Student Participants:

Ben Albee, Treasurer, UConn Praxis
Nour Al Zouabi, Undergraduate Student
Mason Holland, President, Undergraduate Student Government
Natalie Seier, President, UConn Praxis

1. Call to Order:

Trustee called the meeting of the Student Life Committee to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. Public Participation:

No public participation noted.

3. Approval of Minutes:

On a motion by Trustee Pollard, seconded by Trustee Fang, the minutes of the April 7, 2021, Student Life Committee meeting were approved as circulated.

4. COVID-19 Update and Discussion:

Eleanor Daugherty reported on UConn's vaccination rate of 99% on the Storrs Campus and the Regional Campuses are 90% or higher. We continue to take preventative measures of mask wearing and do have a few cases over the course of the fall semester; however, we have 11,000 residential students on campus and 90% of our classes are in-person. We are feeling positive going into the Spring semester and hope to release more housing to students. Masking continues and is an active conversation. Flu shots will be administered by SHaW as well as Booster Shots to students.

Trustee Cantor commented on the very impressive leadership and complimented students on protecting themselves and their fellow students by following the appropriate protocols.

A brief discussion took place on SHaW regarding staffing and wait times. Several new staff have been hired, wait time is less this year and they are currently conducting searches for several more positions. A review of the Regional Campuses and their needs has been concluded as well.

Trustee Cantor suggested that SHaW and some of their new staff attend our next Student Life Committee meeting for an update.

5. Returning to Campus In-Person:

Michael Gilbert introduced Mason Holland and Nour Al Zouabi to discuss their experience returning to campus in-person this semester.

Mason Holland thanked the Committee for inviting him to the meeting to talk about his in-person return to campus. Being back on campus is amazing and to see everyone back and engaged is wonderful. Students seem to more open to new experiences and are more receptive to each other. The COVID polices were rolled out very well and students are aware we need to keep our masks on to be able to remain on campus in person. Mason has heard from several students that access to COVID testing is difficult, especially to students that do not have vehicles to get off campus. Generally, the student body tries to understand our fellow students as best we can.

Nour Al Zouabi came to Storrs as a Campus Change student from the Stamford Campus. She was very pleased to see campus full of students and has learned so much more being in-person in classes. Living on campus for the first time and knowing that Storrs is 99% vaccinated is because of the COVID polices. Challenges and difficulties for students is getting tested. She is excited for the COVID forums that will take place at the Regional Campuses in the next week.

The weekly e-mail communications to students through every week has been very helpful and informative.

Trustee Cantor thanked both Mason and Nour for attending our meeting and sharing their experiences with us.

6. UConn PIRG (Praxis) Update:

Michael Gilbert shared background information on the waivable fee charged to UConn Storrs for UConnPIRG (Public Interest Research Group) that was established in the 1970's. This is a student activism group that works on several issues relating to the environment, campaign finance reform, corporate watchdog causes, and other issues. The Board of Trustees voted on July 9, 1976, to charge a \$2 per semester fee with a negative checkoff which was certified by the Attorney General in April 1977. The current fee is \$5 per semester with a negative checkoff but was suspended pending review (not collected Fall Semester 2021). In Spring 21 UConnPIRG ended their relationship with CONNPIRG and renamed their organization PRAXIS and informed university staff they hoped to continue fee funding into the future. In consultation with Rachel Rubin, it was recommended that PRAXIS initiate a conversation with the Student Life Committee. We have invited Natalie Seier, the current PRAXIS President and Ben, the Treasurer to participate in this discussion.

Natalie thanked the Committee for inviting her and Ben to attend today's meeting to talk about the name change. UConnPIRG worked with professional staff of CONNPIRG on non-partisan campaigns. Four years ago, students were finding a lack of staff support and mistreatment of students by CONNPIRG, there were continued discrepancies in the operational and contractual obligations. In November of 2021, UConnPIRG students chose not to move forward with UConnPIRG and CONNPIRG and created Praxis, a more equitable and accessible organization for students. Praxis is also one of the last trustee student groups to pay their leadership. They run broader campaigns and work closely with the Undergraduate Student Government. CONNPIRG has been paid for all appropriate contracts and the next step to move forward is to see where our fee will go. Discussion took place on the waivable fee as well as the current UConnPIRG funds.

Trustee Cantor thanked Natalie and Ben for attending and talking the Committee through the reason for the name change. The Student Life Committee will need to have more conversations before we can make a recommendation to go to the Board of Trustees.

7. Student Rally for a Peaceful Planet:

Approximately two weeks ago, a rally was held on campus that was heavily attended by faculty, staff, and students. Eleanor Daugherty talked about the rally and the importance of the work that went into the rally as well as the attendance. There is always more work to be done and we

continue to work on bias behavior on campus. The Bias Action Group will include a broad array of students to help us. Mason Holland talked about his experience at the rally and the work USG is doing to support Racism as a Public Health Crisis at UConn. USG passed a Resolution Concerning Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis at the University of Connecticut. Interim President Andy indicated it was a great introduction to work with and listen to the students and see the work that was done before the rally and during the rally. UConn has a special set of students who are not just active, but deeply thoughtful.

Trustee Cantor asked Mason to share the USG Resolution with the Committee. We do have very thoughtful student leaders and we appreciate the significant effort that went into this rally.

8. Other Business:

Trustee Cantor asked if there was any other business and if anyone had thoughts/ideas for future agenda items other than SHaW Review and Racism as a Public and Mental Health Crisis.

Trustee Frank thanked Mason Holland and the other students in attendance tonight for sharing their student experiences which helps this Committee to get a check on the Campus. There are many students focusing on the good. Trustee Frank has been meeting with the Regional Presidents and talking with them about issues on their campuses, he has been meeting with Vice President Gilbert on a bi-weekly basis to talk about topics, student experiences, etc. He is very pleased that UConn is at a 99% vaccination rate.

Trustee Fang has been talking with the graduate students and they are happy to be back in person, especially teaching assistants. Mask wearing is always a topic for discussion with them, but we need to keep wearing them to stay in-person. He would like to discuss at some point, additional services being offered to students, such as legal counsel advice.

9. Executive Session:

There was no Executive Session held.

10. Adjournment:

On a motion by Trustee Fang, seconded by Trustee Frank, the meeting of the Student Life Committee was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully,

Cathy Downs
Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs