

Annual Report to the University Senate

Academic Year 2024-2025

Student Welfare Committee

2024/2025 Student Welfare Committee Members:

- ***Leo Lachut, ISS, Co-Chair, Academic Achievement Center**
- ***Tina McCarthy, Co-Chair, Student Health and Wellness**
- *Alexis Boylan, SFA
- *Andy Bush, CLAS
- *Kate Fuller, UConn Libraries
- *Erica Granoff, Student Services (Stamford Campus)
- *Nathanael Okpych, Social Work (Hartford)
- *Jennifer Pascal, Engineering
- *Tracy Rittenhouse, CAHNR
- *Sarah Scheidel, Enrichment Programs
- *Mike Shor, CLAS
- *Fiona Vernal, CLAS, History
- Jibreel Akbar, Undergraduate Student
- Bryanna Anderson, Center for Students with Disabilities
- Cynthia Costanzo, Interim Vice President for Student Life (Ex-Officio Member)
- Kimberly Duby, Dean of Students Office
- Arthur Galinat, International Student & Scholar Services
- Nina Lemash, Undergraduate Student
- Katherine McCarthy, One Stop Student Services Office
- Suzanne Peters, Financial Aid
- Megan Petsa, The Graduate School
- Peter Tribuzio, Student Services, Hartford Campus

*Senate Member 2024/2025

University Senate – Student Welfare Committee

End-of-Year Report

Academic Year: 2024–2025

Co-Chairs: Leo Lachut & Tina McCarthy

The Student Welfare Committee (SWC) is charged with identifying, discussing, and addressing issues related to student life and wellbeing across all University of Connecticut campuses. This academic year, our committee engaged in meaningful dialogue, gathered input from a variety of campus stakeholders, and explored solutions to improve the student experience in areas such

as housing, transportation, financial aid, health and wellness, equity and inclusion, and institutional policy awareness.

Specific Topics Addressed:

Committee Work Summary

1. Focus Areas and Updates from Ongoing Topics

Non-Binary Identifier in Peoplesoft: The committee received an update confirming that a non-binary gender identifier is in development and will soon be implemented in Peoplesoft.

Regional Concerns: The committee continued to elevate regional campus student needs throughout the year, especially in the areas of transportation, parking, health services, and housing.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Discussions throughout the year included specific support for first-generation, international, undocumented, and LGBTQIA+ students, with guests and presenters highlighting key resources and policy developments.

1.

2. Guest Presentations & Collaborative Conversations

The committee benefited from multiple guest speakers and experts who contributed to our understanding of evolving student needs:

- **Cynthia Costanzo & Isaac Barber:** Presented updates on the Outdoor Activities Policy, event space scheduling, and the rebranding of the InForm site to "Get Informed."
- **Arthur Galinat (CISS):** Shared a comprehensive overview of international student services and common challenges including housing and cultural transition.
- **Karen McComb & Emily Pagano:** Introduced UConn's adoption of the Okanagan Charter and efforts to become a health-promoting university.
- **Sue Peters (Financial Aid):** Provided detailed data on FAFSA, Pell eligibility, and the impacts of federal changes. The committee raised questions about transparency, student understanding of aid, and future communications.
- **Maureen Armstrong & Kristina Stevens:** Reviewed UConn's post-crisis response protocols for serious incidents affecting students, including communication strategies and community support.
- **Andy Kelly (Logistics):** Presented data and updates regarding parking, transportation, and scooter safety concerns across campuses.

- **Fany Hannon (Dean of Students):** Led an informative discussion on supporting undocumented students, LGBTQIA+ student support, and institutional messaging.
- **Vern Granger (Admissions):** Offered updates on the Early Decision admission process and enrollment strategy.
- **Kat McCarthy (One Stop):** Shared insights into record-breaking application numbers and coordination with financial aid decision timelines.

3. *Topics of Ongoing Concern and Future Attention*

- **Class Size and Enrollment Growth:** The committee discussed the impact of increasing undergraduate enrollment on classroom capacity, staffing, off-campus housing, and transportation infrastructure.
- **Regional Campus Resources:** A continued need for stronger infrastructure, health services (e.g., Nurse Navigators), and accessible programming was raised.
- **Parking & Transportation:** Key concerns included high parking fees, safety, limited weekend shuttle access, scooter regulations, bike lanes and the need for more designated bike/scooter storage areas.
- **Weather Policy:** This discussion was tabled pending a motion from Scholastic Standards at the March 2025 Senate meeting.
- **Student Mental Health:** The committee heard student input, particularly from student member Jabreel Akbar, about prioritizing mental health and wellness.
- **AI and Academic Integrity:** Members highlighted the importance of continued dialogue around artificial intelligence and its implications for student success and academic policies.

Initiatives & Impact

First-Gen Week Support: Committee members helped promote and support First Gen Week events, recognizing that a significant percentage of UConn students identify as first-generation.

Policy Review: The committee contributed to the review and potential revision of the Student Welfare Committee charge, including the addition of language explicitly referencing undergraduate and graduate students.

Feedback on Campus Services: The committee engaged in active dialogue to help clarify the scope and language of services, such as rebranding "Nurse Navigators" to avoid confusion about medical care access. With expansion of Regional Campuses Residential housing, will there be a commitment to 24/7 support for students in on campus housing.

Areas for Continued Collaboration

As Co-Chairs, we encourage continued work across the university to:

- Increase clarity and access to financial aid information.
- Ensure regional students have equitable access to services.
- Improve cross-campus communication regarding policy changes and expectations.
- Strengthen post-crisis support systems.
- Foster a proactive, student-centered approach to housing, transportation, and wellness.
- We also recommend ongoing collaboration with Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Health and Wellness (SHAW), CISS, and the Dean of Students Office to ensure that efforts are aligned with student needs and experiences.

Appreciation

We extend our sincere thanks to all committee members for their thoughtful contributions, to our student representatives for sharing honest feedback, and to all guest speakers and departments that shared their expertise. We are especially grateful to Tina McCarthy for stepping into the Co-Chair role this year and for her leadership and partnership.

Submitted by:

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Tina McCarthy

Co-Chair, University Senate Student Welfare Committee

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