
Annual Report to the University Senate

Academic Year 2025–2026 Student Welfare Committee

2025–2026 Student Welfare Committee Members

- *Leo Lachut, ISS, Co-Chair, Academic Achievement Center
- *Jennifer Tibbetts, Co-Chair, One Stop Student Services
- *Valarie Artigas, Nursing
- *Alexis Boylan, SFA
- *Arthur Galinat, International Student & Scholar Services
- *Erica Granoff, Student Services (Stamford Campus)
- *Amy McKeon, CAHNR Professional Staff
- *Sarira Motaref, Engineering
- *Nathanael Okpych, Social Work (Hartford)
- *Tracy Rittenhouse, CAHNR
- *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
- Abhishek Dubey, Graduate Student
- Serena Lee, Undergraduate Student
- Tina McCarthy, SHaW

- Suzanne Peters, Financial Aid
- Megan Petsa, The Graduate School
- Peter Tribuzio, Student Services, Hartford/Waterbury Campus

Senate Members 2025–2026

University Senate – Student Welfare Committee

End-of-Year Report

Academic Year: 2025–2026

Co-Chairs: Leo Lachut & Jennifer Tibbetts

Committee Charge

The Student Welfare Committee is charged with reviewing the conditions that contribute to the academic success, personal development, and well-being of undergraduate and graduate students.

Committee Work Summary

Throughout the 2025–2026 academic year, the Student Welfare Committee engaged in thoughtful dialogue, data-informed discussions, and collaborative problem-solving to better understand and improve the student experience across all University of Connecticut campuses. The committee examined key issues related to student well-being, safety, financial access, campus climate, and equitable access to resources, with particular attention to regional campus experiences and emerging national and institutional challenges.

1. Focus Areas and Updates from Ongoing Topics

Regional Campus Experience & Campus Change

- Continued focus on the student experience across regional campuses, including housing expansion, access to services, and long-term strategic planning.

- Significant discussion on **campus change data**, highlighting disparities in 6-year graduation rates (83% vs. 64%) and identifying key contributing factors such as belonging, academic rigor, financial strain, and institutional fit.
- Strong support for enhanced transition supports, including potential **campus change orientation programming** and increased access to housing.

Financial Aid & Affordability

- Ongoing discussions regarding late-stage financial aid awards, federal policy changes, and the broader impact of affordability on student persistence.
- Concerns raised regarding transparency, timing of awards, and impacts of federal legislation on aid structures.

Housing & Capacity

- Updates highlighted that housing demand continues to exceed capacity, with the university operating above 100% occupancy.
- Expansion of housing at regional campuses, including Hartford, reflects a shift toward more residential experiences.

Student Safety & Well-Being

- Continued concern regarding **mental health trends**, including increased referrals and calls related to student well-being.
- Discussions around campus and off-campus safety, including gaps in support for students living outside university-managed housing.

2. Guest Presentations & Collaborative Conversations

The committee hosted a number of guest speakers who provided insight into key areas impacting student welfare:

- **Amy Gorin** – Regional Campus Strategic Plan, including growth, capacity, and programmatic focus areas.
- **Alicia McKenzie** – Black student experience and campus climate, including student-reported experiences with bias and racism.
- **Kymerley Hendricks** – Office of Student Care & Concern, including case management processes, referral systems, and behavioral threat assessment.

- **UConn Police Department Leadership (Gene Labonte, Justin Gilbert, Magdalena Silver)** – Campus safety, Clery reporting, and trends in mental health and pedestrian safety.
- **Arthur Galinat** – International student support, including immigration challenges, travel restrictions, and crisis response.
- **Bryanna Anderson** – Center for Students with Disabilities, highlighting rapid growth in accommodations (approximately 7,000 registered students).
- **Jenn Longa, Hannah Halloran, Sarah Chipman** – Title IX compliance, reporting responsibilities, and student support resources.
- **Liza Boritz** – Campus change data and analysis of student outcomes across campuses.

These presentations supported the committee’s ongoing efforts to understand complex, intersecting challenges facing students and to elevate data-informed, student-centered solutions.

3. Topics of Ongoing Concern and Future Attention

The committee identified several key areas requiring continued attention:

- **Mental Health & Student Support Systems**
Increasing demand for services and complexity of student needs.
- **Regional Campus Equity**
Ensuring consistent access to resources, services, and opportunities across all campuses.
- **Campus Change Experience**
Addressing belonging, financial barriers, and academic transition challenges.
- **Financial Aid & Federal Policy Changes**
Monitoring evolving legislation and its impact on student affordability.
- **International Student Policy Changes**
Concerns related to visa regulations, travel restrictions, and external policy shifts.
- **Campus Safety & Infrastructure**
Including scooter/bike safety, pedestrian risks, and off-campus student support.

- **Bias, Title IX, and Campus Climate**
Continued focus on inclusive environments and institutional response to student concerns.
 - **Enrollment Growth & Resource Strain**
Impacts of increased enrollment and budget constraints on student services.
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Initiatives & Impact

- **Data-Informed Dialogue:** The committee elevated the use of institutional data (e.g., campus change outcomes) to inform discussion and potential interventions.
 - **Cross-Unit Collaboration:** Strengthened collaboration between key offices including Student Health and Wellness, Dean of Students, Financial Aid, One Stop, CSD, ISSS, and Campus Safety.
 - **Student Voice:** Continued to center undergraduate and graduate student perspectives in discussions, particularly around belonging, mental health, and access to resources.
 - **Policy Awareness:** Increased understanding of institutional processes related to Title IX, behavioral intervention, and student support systems.
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Areas for Continued Collaboration

As Co-Chairs, we recommend continued institutional focus on:

- Enhancing support for students transitioning between campuses, including structured orientation and housing access.
- Expanding mental health and case management resources to meet increasing demand.
- Improving clarity and communication around financial aid processes and policy changes.
- Ensuring equitable access to services and resources across all campuses.
- Strengthening coordination between academic, student affairs, and administrative units to support holistic student success.
- Continuing proactive conversations around campus climate, safety, and inclusion.

Appreciation

We extend our sincere appreciation to all committee members for their thoughtful engagement and commitment to improving the student experience. We are especially grateful to our student representatives for sharing their perspectives and lived experiences, which continue to inform and shape our work.

We also thank our guest speakers and campus partners for their transparency, expertise, and collaboration throughout the year.

Submitted by:

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Jennifer Tibbetts

Co-Chair, University Senate Student Welfare Committee
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