

University Senate
Student Welfare Committee
October 11, 2013

Meeting called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Attendance: Corina Morris, Karen Bresciano, Kevin Alvarez, Teresa Dominguez, Susanna Cowan, Michael Gilbert, Larry Goodheart, Elizabeth Conklin, Lauren Donais

Discussion about Rape Culture

Attorney Elizabeth Conklin, Associate Vice President and Title IX Coordinator, and Lauren Donais, Instructor in WGSS/Women's Center Program Specialist, were guests. Kevin Alvarez reviewed his concern about the responses that occurred last semester in regard to a female undergraduate who posted her worry that the rebranding of an aggressive Husky Mascot encouraged a "rape culture" on campus. Some anonymous responses were not only impolite but threatened sexual violence. As a result, the situation was investigated by Community Standards, the Police Department, and Diversity and Equity. In turn, President Susan Herbst convened a campus Task Force on Civility that will issue a report.

Conklin and Donais then facilitated a wide ranging and informative discussion for the next 90 minutes. Among the major points:

- Conklin distributed a "Policy against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships" (effective date August 7, 2013) available online at <http://ode.uconn.edu>. It includes "Frequently Asked Questions," "Romantic Relationships Reporting Form," "Sexual Assault Response Policy," and "University Resources."
- Donais distributed a handout, "Campus Programs Addressing Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Sexual Harassment, and Stalking," whose rubrics were "Violence against Women Prevention Program," "Education," "Advocacy," and "Support Services." As an example of her instruction for students, she distributed another handout that included these topics: "What is rape culture?", "Does rape culture exist here on campus?", "So it exist, but how widespread is it?", a diagram of rape culture based on the research of David Lipsak, "How are we already addressing rape culture?", and "Ideas for Future Consideration."
- There was much discussion about the definition, accuracy, and cultural context – on and off campus – of rape culture. They included: the sexual objectification of girls and women; blaming the victim; commercial advertising (e.g., American Apparel); Senate candidate Todd Adkin's statement on "'legitimate' rape"; your e cards with a message that "No means yes. Yes means anal"; UConn TV airs "rape is funny" video; and an UConn "handle" on twitter entitled "boobs and butts." The overall axiom is that sexual violence is a symptom of sexism.
- Donais and Conklin emphasized that on campus stranger assaults are the exception. Most issues of sexual transgression, whether heterosexual or homosexual, involve acquaintances and the breakdown of how far on a "Friday night out" things will go.
- The path breaking research of David Lisak at UMass Boston indicates that of 1800 male undergraduates self-reporting 76 or less than 5 percent of the total were core sex

offenders who engaged repeatedly in such aggression. Lisak is scheduled to visit UConn to collaborate with colleagues on the prevention of sexual assault.

- Conklin pointed out while Community Standards acts on the basis of a preponderance of evidence, while criminal prosecution has the standard of guilt that is beyond a reasonable doubt. A robust investigation is needed to uncover core sexual offenders.
- UConn has a high expulsion rate for sexual assault.
- At UConn athletes are not greater sexual offenders than other students. The heightened emphasis on athletics, however, skews the reporting.
- There is an ongoing effort at the Storrs Campus to make more secure and rename the so-called “rape trail.”
- The UConn Student Code applies on and off campus. Hosts of non-UConn students are responsible for their guests’ behavior. Title IX applies to contractors on campus, off campus interns, and students abroad.
- The Committee agreed with Michael Gilbert’s recommendation to invite the Task Force on Civility to our first meeting of the next semester.

Old Business: Karen Bresciano asked when is the policy on Bunched Finals and Final Evaluation going to be finalized. Larry Goodheart will bring this imperative to the next Senate Executive and Heads of Committees meeting.

Next Meeting: The Committee agreed with Karen Bresciano’s recommendation that Vice-Provost Sally Reis be invited to our November meeting to discuss the impending policy of Freshman Transfer of Credits. We meet **November 22, Friday, 9:30 in Rowe 230 – the previously scheduled meeting date of November 8 is cancelled.**

Adjournment 11:00 a.m.

Submitted by Larry Goodheart on October 22, 2013.