

**Annual Report
Student Welfare Committee, 2015-2016
University of Connecticut Senate**

Committee Charge:

This committee shall review the conditions that contribute to the academic success, personal development and well-being of students, including available forms of financial aid. It may seek the opinion of the University Senate on such matters and make recommendations. The committee shall include one graduate student and two undergraduate students.

Committee Members:

*Karen Bresciano, Chair, Student Affairs	Eliza Conrad, USG
*Peter Gogarten, Molecular & Cell Biology	Sydney Dinkeloo, USG
*Lewis Gordon, CLAS	Kate Fuller, UConn Libraries
*Karl Guillard, CAHNR	Gerry Gianutsos, Pharmacy
*Shareen Hertel, Political Science	Michael Gilbert, VPSA (Ex Officio)
*Patricia Jepson, CAHNR Advising	Kelly Kennedy, Business
*Katherine Pancak, Business	Erin Mason, Registrar's Office
*Robert Tilton, English	Morty Ortega, CAHNR
*Jaci VanHeest, Education	Michelle San Pedro, GSS

Cross-Representation:

Patricia Jepson- Diversity Committee
Karl Guillard- Growth & Development

Report of Activities:

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the Student Welfare Committee met with constituents across the University during nine monthly meetings from September to May.

Resolution/Motions Passed:

***In Support of the Open Textbook Initiative
September 21, 2015***

WHEREAS, The College Board estimates students spend an average of \$1200 annually on textbooks

and materials¹;

WHEREAS, Textbook prices have increased 82% between 2002 and 2012, 3 times the rate of inflation²;

WHEREAS, Current college textbook costs compromise student success: 65% of students have forgone buying a textbook because it was too expensive; the majority of those students did so even though they believed it could hurt them academically³;

WHEREAS, The growing availability of low- to no-cost, high quality instructional content provides

possible alternatives to commercially available textbooks in many disciplines;

WHEREAS, Open Source textbooks are written by authors who are recognized as experts within their

field and allow for professors to alter course material as they deem necessary;

WHEREAS, The pending *Affordable College Textbook Act* (S.1704 / H.R. 3538) will make textbooks

more affordable and accessible through the expansion of open educational resources;

WHEREAS, The Connecticut State Legislature has passed *An Act Concerning the Use of Digital*

Open-Source Textbooks in Higher Education (H.B. 6117), establishing a state-wide pilot program to assess and promote the use of high quality open source textbooks; analyze the potential cost savings to students; and identify barriers to the effective use of open source textbooks;

WHEREAS, A resolution authored by the Undergraduate Student Government and UConn Public

Interest Research Group (UConn PIRG) resulted in the formation of the Open Textbook Initiative, a University-wide committee consisting of student group representatives, librarians, faculty, administrators, and the UConn Co-op Board, to investigate and promote affordable and open course materials at UConn; be it

RESOLVED, That the University Senate urge faculty to utilize existing procedures to reduce costs to

students, including using library-licensed resources; rental programs; course packets; assigning older editions of texts; and complying with textbook request due dates, which provides the bookstore opportunities to provide lower cost options and better buy-back prices; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the University Senate encourage faculty to continue exploring means to increase the

use of high quality, low- or no-cost, accessible instructional materials as replacements for more expensive course materials; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the University Senate support the Open Textbook Initiative and the state-wide pilot

program, which will actively raise awareness and provide opportunities for building expertise in the adoption of affordable and accessible course materials

1 The College Board. (2015). *Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2014-15*.

<http://trends.collegeboard.org/collegepricing/>

[figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2014-15](http://trends.collegeboard.org/collegepricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2014-15)

2 United States Government Accountability Office. (2013). *College textbooks: Students have greater access to textbook*

information. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/655066.pdf>

3 Senack, E. & U.S.PIRG. (2014). *Fixing the broken textbook market: How students respond to high textbook costs and*

demand alternatives, <http://www.uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market>

Summary of Monthly Meetings:

Full minutes of each meeting can be found at

<http://www.senate.uconn.edu/SWC/swcminutes.html>

Over the course of the year we invited several guest to our meetings to discuss many topics including the following:

Open Text Book Initiative Resolution- Martha Bedard can come to our meeting on 4/21/15 to discuss the issues. Kate Fuller worked to create the resolution, which passed 9/21/15.

Regional Campus Student Welfare Taskforce- The taskforce, formed, and met. They decided to hold focus groups at each campus with students, faculty, and staff. They created a list of standardized questions for each group to be asked at each campus. The notes of all of these meetings were compiled and will be used to create surveys for students, faculty and staff at each campus. During the year, another group was formed to look at issues surrounding the decision to have common schedule/start time. They too were planning to survey folks about their topic. These groups have decided to merge their surveys. They will create the surveys together and administer the surveys in the fall of 2016.

Common Schedule/Start Times- This was a topic of much discussion since this mandate seemed to come down quickly with little to no discussion with regionals and seemingly little time to prepare for the change. It was significant to the Regional Campus Student Welfare Taskforce and impacted how they spent their time and the current collaboration. It did go into effect for the spring semester. Some campuses have reported that they were able to accommodate most requests and the change was tolerated. Other campuses have reported that it has significantly impacted the usage of their campus. Instead of being active Monday through Thursday and quiet on Friday, they are now packed on Tuesday and Thursday with nearly no activity on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The groups looking at this topic will continue doing so into the Fall 2016 semester.

Active Threat Training/Facilities Issues- Guests from OEM and UCPD, Lt. Chris Casa, Capt. Chris Renshaw, Ofc. Ketan Padalia, Ofc Eric Bard, Mary Rose Duberek, and Blaize Levitan gave a comprehensive overview of the work of the Office of Emergency Management, including information on trainings that they can do for faculty, staff, and students. They asked us for ideas on getting in front of more faculty and we suggested coming to a Senate meeting to give an update and a pitch for their training offerings. This occurred during the March Senate meeting.

Services for International Students, Graduate Students, and International Graduate Students -Dan Weiner and Kent Holsinger came to speak with us about our concerns and questions. We had an extensive conversation on the need for graduate students to have access to close and affordable housing. The desire for family housing was also highlighted. Michael shared that it looks like the number of beds that we can offer to graduate students has more than doubled for next year. It was also commented that Off-Campus Student Services has done well offering information to students about how to access off-campus housing.

We discussed that transportation continues to be a challenge for graduate students, another issue that disproportionately impacts our international graduate students. Also, we discussed the need for support for incoming graduate students (with an emphasis on international graduate students) and the feeling that some departments are great about helping new students get settled and others are not quite as proactive. Kent spoke about where graduate students are to go if they have a concern about anything not strictly connected to their academics, sharing that they have three members of his staff that have some responsibility for this sort of thing.

Housing, On and Off Campus- Pam Schipani and Beverly Wood came and spoke with us about current and developing issues surrounding housing on and off campus. The Nathan Hale will keep running as at least a partial hotel until there is another hotel option in the area. The University is actively pursuing partners for a new hotel. Developers have been coming in to see about demand on and off campus. They are doing a market analysis.

Library Budget- We had many discussions over the year about the concerning cuts to library budget which would have impact to both faculty and student services. We are pleased to learn there were mitigations put into place to lessen this impact for the upcoming year.

Academic Integrity Policy- Discussion with Scholastic Standards and with SEC as well as concern raised by Ellen Tripp from CPIA (NCAA requirement for campuses to have a policy and consistent administration to athletes vs non-athletes), prompted SEC to ask our committee to look at this topic. Primary was the anecdotal, but educated impression that the policy was not being implemented by instructors as written, specifically, the requirement for instructors to inform Community Standards when they suspect academic misconduct and have implemented a sanction/consequence. The student welfare concern is that students may not be learning of their right to a hearing and that Community Standards may not be able to recognize patterns of repeat violations without these reports. Our committee wondered if this was, in fact the case, and if so, why was this occurring. With the help of Sarah Redlich, HESA practicum student, we developed a survey for both instructors of undergraduates and for students to provide us information about their experience with, feeling about, and use of UConn's current policy. Sarah also did a review of peer and aspirant institutions. The review of this data will continue into next year, though preliminary data suggests that only about 30% of instructors who responded to the survey informed Community Standards when dealing with cases in their classes. Ashley Vrabely from Community Standards, joined us at our April meeting to share the perspective of her office. Other issues for next year's continued discussion are the definition of plagiarism (intent, citation error vs. intentional misrepresentation of another's work as one's own) as well as procedures for dealing with plagiarism on non-classroom work, such as applications.

Greek Life- The SEC asked us to look at student welfare issues as it relates to the Greek community, specifically issues around underage drinking and other troubling behavior at university sponsored or related events. Todd Sullivan, Director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will be attending our May meeting, taking place after the submission of this annual report.

Anticipated and Continuing Topics for Next Year include the following:

Regional Campus Student Welfare Taskforce

Academic Integrity Policy

Dining Services Update

CMHS/SHS Update

Respectively Submitted on April 24, 2016 by Karen L. Bresciano