University Senate Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2019

A regular meeting of the University Senate was held on
Monday, September 9, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.

in the ROME BALLROOM, Storrs Campus

The University Senate is Called to Order

The first regular University Senate meeting of the 2019-2020 academic year was called to order by Provost Elliott at 4:00 pm. The meeting was formally opened by President Katsouleas at 4:01 pm.

Note: Agenda items 1 and 2 were taken in reverse order. Numbering has been adjusted accordingly.

1. Land Acknowledgement Statement
   Per the University Senate Diversity Committee resolution, which was passed by the University Senate April 29, 2019, to the President read the Land Acknowledgement Statement prior to the start of this first meeting of the academic year.

2. Election of Moderator and Secretary
   President Katsouleas opened the floor for nominations for Moderator of the University Senate for the 2019-2020 academic year. Senator Fang nominated Senator Siegle. The motion was seconded by Senator Long.

   Senator Siegle was elected Moderator of the University Senate.

   President Katsouleas yielded the floor to Moderator Siegle for the election of Secretary.

   Moderator Siegle opened the floor for nominations for Secretary of the University Senate for the 2019-2020 academic year. Senator Fang nominated Susanna Cowan. The motion was seconded by Senator Hussein.

   Susanna Cowan was elected Secretary of the University Senate.

3. Introduction of Senators
   Per custom, Moderator Siegle began the first University Senate meeting of the academic year by asking Senators to introduce themselves by standing, stating their name,
departmental/University affiliation(s), and memberships on any University Senate committees.

4. Approval of Minutes of April 29, 2019 University Senate meeting

Moderator Siegle presented the minutes of the April 29, 2019 meeting for review. Senator Long moved to approve; Senator Hussein seconded.

The minutes were approved as written with no abstentions.

5. Report of the President – Presented by President Tom Katsouleas

President Katsouleas welcomed those in attendance. He expressed that he was a believer in shared governance based on very good experiences in academic senates in prior roles. He expressed that the opportunity to be with colleagues across disciplines is its greatest reward, as well as the shared interest in university-wide leadership.

He remarked that he had been in office just five weeks, and just two since the return of students to campus. He shared that much work had been accomplished since his arrival and even beforehand, noting that he’d attended six fundraising events prior to his August 1st official start—a pace that, he remarked, continued and was akin to drinking from a firehose. He has been exhilarated by positive interactions with parents, constituents, presidents of peer institutions and others and noted that everyone had been generous and welcoming.

He prefaced his subsequent remarks by saying he would share both some anecdotes as well as some things he’d been working on.

As an anecdote, he shared his positive experience with holding open office hours, a habit he started when a Dean, continued as a Provost, and was continuing here. He remarked that the first office hours had drawn mostly staff and faculty, but that now students were back, they were attending in numbers—even waiting in line for their chance to speak to him. He gave some examples of the great ideas and information students had brought him: for example, an idea support for open support textbooks; the success of the annual HuskyThon (which brought in over 1.3 million dollars last year); an idea from the leader of the student alumni association to increase engagement with students while still students; an Honors Environmental Science major sharing an idea for carbon incentives to support sustainability. He remarked both on the fact that such great ideas came out of four meetings lasting under an hour each (all at Bookworms café in the Benton Museum at 9:30 am), and that students came to the meetings, not to ask for themselves, but wanting to help the world around
them and others. This hasn’t been his experience everywhere, he reflected, and felt that he had landed in a good spot at UConn. In a humorous aside, he noted that one enthusiastic student had invited him to participate in a range of activities, from mud volleyball to jumping out of an airplane—and that he’d be declining the latter.

The President moved on to outline some of the discussions he’d been having with his leadership, which he described as revolving around three key questions:

1) How can we leverage our strength in undergraduate education to be a leader in where 21st-century education is going?

He explained that education is going beyond liberal arts as about students’ identity, about who they are in the world. It is moving toward identity, agency, and purpose. We need to draw on research into the types of experience that provide empowerment and purpose. He noted that we already do that, but that the grand challenge is to do that at scale for 24,000 students. Provost Elliott will work with Vice Provost Volin on a taskforce, identifying faculty who are engaged in this work—and taking it to scale. He believes this work will be transformative and that donors will get behind it.

2) How can we double research and scholarship across the board at UConn?

This is not, he emphasized, all about funding, and that he has been pleased with the answers he’s been getting to this question. The answer isn’t to ask faculty to work twice as hard, but to make particular investments, which will vary by field. In order to identify the research portfolio, he will rely on Vice President [for Research] Maric, who will work with the Provost and Dean of the medical school to form faculty committees in order to find leverage points.

He commented that he had told many people who said there was this or that problem at UConn that he was glad to hear it, that the problem would be much harder if people said there were no problem. He believes people have identified many of the concerns and that we will be able to tap into this. Half of the investment, he continued, will be in faculty already here and half will be expended in recruiting new faculty.

3) How could we more effectively align with economic priorities of the state and governor?

He noted that we already do support state, but with some focused effort and integration with partners believes this could be taken to another level. He believes collaboration and coordination with other higher education leaders in the state across all levels of higher education is critical. He shared that he had met with President Ojakian [of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities system] and got a positive response to the question: do you want to work on something we could do better together then not together? He believes this is an exciting moment in state.
He acknowledged that efforts will initially focus on key areas including advanced manufacturing, biotech, and data science from an integrative perspective. A goal will be workforce development that leaves no demographic behind. He believes we can meet corporate/industry needs while also meeting social goals.

The answers to these questions, he emphasized, will be unique to UConn. Answers to these questions will roll up into a strategic plan by the end of next year. This plan will be transformative, he asserted, if we have answers to these [above] questions. We should be able to read it and think “only UConn can do it,” as it will draw on who we are and our strengths. He added that the Board [of Trustees] hoped for a strategic plan sooner, but that he insisted that both the new Provost and to-be-hired Diversity Officer be a part of the process. Under their leadership a full grassroots effort to engage with forming the strategic plan will take place the following year [after they are appointed].

The President concluded his remarks by describing briefly the search for the new Provost.

The search committee for the Provost will be announced in the coming week. All who were invited accepted and the first meeting will take place around the September 17. Sandra Chafouleas [NEAG, Educational Psychology, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, former Dean of the Graduate School] will head the committee. Based on feedback about prior Provost searches, particularly from academic Deans, who wanted more School [College] representation, each School [College] was asked for a list of names and a name was selected from each. The committee is diverse intellectually, ethnically, and by rank and background. There are elected University Senate Senators on the committee. He noted that he had inadvertently bypassed the University Senate in this process, but would not do so on all future occasions. The committee is also broadly representative and includes students and other groups: the committee’s size is nineteen.

The search process will be consultative but not completely open: deliberations will take place this fall, producing a list by December or January, at which point interviews will be held. The short list will go around the University and meet with all constituencies, including faculty and staff union representatives, development officers, and senior leaders. The committee will be interested in feedback from all of these groups.

The President said he will tell the committee that he really wants us to look for diversity, compatibility with the President, and transformative leadership in the form of a track record of transformative actions. He wants the committee to look for actions that have made individuals the “best in class”; for dynamism; for the ability to work with a complex organization’s commitment to public mission; for the ability to articulate that mission.
The President welcomed questions. Senator Long welcomed the President. He referred to the President’s thematic mention of UConn as the “engine of economic development” the previous week in meetings with both the Governor and the Board of Trustees. He asked what the role of character and citizen development were in this work at the state level? The President responded by way of some history: he described the role of the university in the Middle Ages as the repository of knowledge for all of humankind (libraries, he said in an aside, are great, but it’s universities that have this role). He went on to describe how this role continued until around World War 2, with the emergence of the NSF, when universities became research institutes and places of discovery. Finally, he described, universities at the end of the 20th century took on the role of innovation engine. None of these roles, he said, replaced the original [medieval] one, and that a leading university should do all three. As to character development, he offered that that is where liberal arts education is going: agency connected to real world experiences while still a student. Students will use their power and their knowledge and experiences for the greater good. The “trifecta” are these three [roles of the university], and bringing it to school. We do it. UConn students, he argued, care about the world, about human rights. He remarked that he had met with undergraduate student leaders and they came up with diversity, inclusion, global sustainability, and justice as their priorities. These will all be represented in the strategic plan.

Senator McCutcheon thanked the President for coming and welcomed him. He expressed that he was glad to hear about vision for the university in a time of fiscal challenges; that vision will be challenging to institute. He noted that the University’s block grant is a target and that as it has decreased it is hard to make up for the loss without tuition as the place as where we make it up. The President shared a conversation he had with the Governor before he took the role in which he asked the Governor if he intended to put UConn on a path toward less funding. The Governor reiterated the value of the University as an economic driver and a source of mind and spirit in the state. The Governor said his goal would be to keep support steady. The President said that he expressed his commitment to the Governor to generate new revenue over time through philanthropy and other missions such as new masters programs and other revenue-generating programs in order to gain greater independence from the state over time—but that steady support was critical. The Governor said he would try to do this—and he did. In his many cuts, he did not cut funding to UConn. This may change over time. The leadership team will work on revenue generation and also on messaging around tuition increases. There’s a social contract between us and the state: they kept their end, so we have to do all we can to keep increases minimal.

Senator Bansal noted that our rankings had slipped a little in the U.S. News report, and that of note was a decrease in alumni donations. What, he asked, can we do about that? The
President answered that one of the best things he had done so far was to participate in recruiting and hiring Scott Roberts [the new President and CEO of the UConn Foundation]. Roberts is a rising star from UNLV and he’s been “all in” since his arrival: in the first two months, we are 60% ahead of our prior record. The President believes we’ll “blow the doors off of fundraising” this year. This piece is something we have control over, he continued. Three factors affected our drop in the rankings, he went on, two of which were beyond our control and reflected changes in methodology. We can raise the alumni percent. In a meeting with head of student alumni, they discussed participation competition: between students and faculty, between schools, etc. It’s not about dollars; it’s about participation, about growing excitement.

Senator Gibson remarked on one of the biggest issues regarding increased research, the high F&A [Facilitates and Administrative] and fringe rates. He asked whether there was any hope of them coming down. The President referred to the large scale of this problem: almost eighty million dollars a year. His top priority with regard to this was to mitigate somehow the burden of this on competitive grant proposals—the scale of that particular problem is 13 million dollars. To grow by 25 million requires an investment of 25 million (one half to newly hired faculty; one half invested in existing faculty), so about 13 million in investment. Of that 3-4 million could be used to mitigate, leaving the leftover to invest in other things. The work of ten faculty at UConn Health and ten faculty here led to an understanding that there is no one size fits all: what would work for some won’t for others. The NFC [National Finance Center] won’t allow matching funds, so Vice President Maric and he will have to work through additional options so that all faculty have options that will work for them. He has asked state legislators for help with this. Right now the work is on a partial fix and then more work will come in the next session.

The President concluded his remarks at 4:47 pm.

6. Report of the Senate Executive Committee - Presented by SEC Chair Veronica Makowsky

[Senator Makowsky presented the report of the Senate Executive Committee [SEC].]

7. Consent Agenda Items:

Report of the Nominating Committee

[Attachment #2]
There was a note that, in addition to the nominations and deletions recommended by the Nominating Committee, Erin Curry would not be joining the Senate as a graduate student representative, and that a new nomination would be forthcoming.

Report of the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee

The Senate voted to approve the Consent Agenda reports as posted with no abstentions.

8. Resolution in Support of the Day of Action on the Climate Crisis - Presented by Senator Hedley Freake on behalf of the Senate Executive Committee

Senator Freake opened by reflecting on the recent catastrophic global climate events: Hurricane Dorian and the summer forest fires in the Amazon jungle. In Hurricane Dorian, he reflected, we see a clear demonstration that those who get affected by these events are not the folks who caused it and that those affected are those least able to deal with it. There is no doubt about what needs to be done now; the need for action is past due. Real life events have gone past us that we need to take more seriously. He noted that young people have been most active, especially the generation younger than college aged, as it is their future at stake.

[Senator Freake presented the “Resolution in Support of the Day of Action on the Climate Crisis, 9/20/19”, which endorses students, staff and faculty who choose to take action September 20th and specifically asks faculty to make provision for students who may miss class that day to participate in a climate strike.]

The floor was opened for discussion.

Senator Long asked whether discussions with University administration [referred to in the Resolution] include discussion about the [University] Foundation disinvesting in fossil fuels. Senator Freake responded that they probably would.

Senator McCutcheon asked for additional details about what faculty were being asked to do during the strike, wondering if it was limited to students being absent from class. Senator Freake asked for permission of the Senate to allow the student group organizing the strike to speak. Permission was given. Kelly Rafferty, the student President of the Fridays for Future group at the University, explained that the strike would take place on September 20th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. During the strike, students participating would walk out of classes and gather on Fairfield Way [on the Storrs campus]. There would be speakers from 12-1:00 p.m. and after 1:00 strikers would march toward the President’s office [a nod and smile to
President Katsouleas, who chuckled and smiled in return], where they would present a 4-part resolution asking that the University: 1. Stop the expansion of fossil fuels (including the 2nd proposed cogeneration plant), 2. Divest in fossil fuels, 3. Transition to 100% renewable energy as quickly as possible, 4. Increase transparency about climate status for students.

**Dr. Anji Seth** [Dept. of Geography] spoke as a resident climate scientist in support of the resolution. She offered a brief overview of the current status of the climate crisis. In this summary, she referred to the work of the IPCC [the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a body of the United Nations]. She stated that the urgency of the crisis is coming from the scientific community not “crazy folks.” The latest “1.5 report” [referring to an overall 1.5°C rise in global temperatures] came out a year ago and states that once global warming reaches 2 degrees [Celsius] globally, we will see dangerous changes. In order to meet the 1.5 [degrees Celsius] goal, or at least keep the increase well below 2 [degrees], we have to be at “net zero” [emissions] by 2050. As the West is responsible for most of these emissions, the West needs to reach net zero by 2030. This is based on science. The situation is becoming more urgent, not less, and we can’t keep kicking the can down the road. We [the University] have much to be proud of, she noted, but the science says more and faster and that this is a critical time. Based on current state and University planning, we are not on schedule to meet these objectives [net zero by 2030]. She concluded by noting that there is also good news: renewables are becoming less expensive and the ability to have [energy] storage and capacity is increasing exponentially. She stated her belief that if we make UConn a leader [in this research, in taking action to reduce emissions dramatically], we will see increased research funds and revenue programs.

Senator McCutcheon stated that he likes the student advocacy and the resolution, but asked whether the Senate’s endorsement would also mean an endorsement of all of the students’ resolutions. Senator Freake responded that no, it would not, as the SEC was unaware of those specifics [of the student resolutions] when they wrote the Senate Resolution.

Senator Philbrick asked whether the sustainability framework plan was available for review? Senator Freake said that it was but he was unsure whether it was available at the sustainability website or elsewhere? He promised that it would be located and made available to the Senate.

The vote was called on the Resolution.

The Resolution passed with no abstentions.
Vice President Fuerst commented that the first Senate meeting of the year often fell on the census date [day ten of the fall semester; when enrollment numbers are locked in for federal reporting]. He noted that the data in his presentation was [therefore] preliminary. He further noted that the presentation was limited to highlights and was not the full range of tabular data, which was coming. He emphasized that the work shown in the slides was the result of something we [the University community] do together. He gets to brag [about the numbers] but it is the work you [the Senate, faculty] do that results in satisfied students; and in the research you lead. Before turning to the presentation, he paused to recognize his team leaders: Suzanne Peters [Director of Financial Aid], Mona Lucas [Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Policies and Strategic Initiatives], and Vern Granger [Director of Admissions].

[Vice President Fuerst presented the enrollment update slide deck.]

Vice President Fuerst welcomed questions.

Senator Howell noted her role as Chair of the Diversity Committee. She commented that “people of color” and “under-represented” are different categories. She noted that the slides didn’t clearly distinguish between categories that are unique and meaningful. Vice President Fuerst responded that what we were seeing followed state demographic shifts, and that there was significant movement [upward in enrollment] across all campuses.

Senator Freake asked if he could comment on the academic quality of transfer students; specifically: is it easier [to get in] as a transfer student than as a freshman? Vice President Fuerst answered by saying it was not easier, that it was a totally different review process [for admission] that now included more holistic review. He noted that it had previously been too formulaic [for transfer admission], relying on just GPA, but that the enhanced holistic review at times mirrored the process for evaluating entering freshmen and was broad and inclusive of essays and such. So no, he concluded, it is not necessarily “easier.”

Senator Bansal enquired about the graduation rate for Pell grant recipients. Vice President Fuerst said they couldn’t recall those numbers of the top of their heads [looking for confirmation to his team], but said they had that data and could share it.

Senator Vokoun asked about the growth at the regional campuses. Are they coming to Storrs, he asked, or do they attend the regional campuses to complete majors they can do there? Vice President Fuerst answered that specific regional-based programs had grown;
he mentioned business programs and first year engineering. There were others, he added, at both Stamford and Hartford.

Senator McCutcheon asked if he could give a quick overview of how admission targets were reached by school. Ultimately, he asked, who makes the decision and were the schools consulted? Vice President Fuerst said that the process was both inclusive and responsive. Communication started with the Deans (and President) to establish enrollment targets. This also happened at the regional campuses in meetings with campus Directors to set targets. Targets, once set, rolled up to the President and CFO and Provost and were then endorsed.

Senator Nunnally asked if the increase in numbers of African Americans was at the regional campuses but not at Storrs. Vice President Fuerst responded that historically there was a percentage drop at Storrs and an increase at the regionals—but that this was not the case this year [he referred to the tables in the slide deck].

10. Report from University Planning, Design and Construction – Presented by Laura Cruickshank, University Master Planner and Chief Architect

[Laura Cruickshank presented a report on the status of current and pending construction projects on the Storrs campus, which in particular focused on ongoing and upcoming work to be done in the Northwest Science quad and adjacent areas.]

The floor was opened for questions.

Senator Gibson noted that he was Chair of the Department of Physics space committee. He remarked that poor planning and communication surrounding the delay of moving a research lab had meant the department was unable to plan for the delay, which had resulted in considerable extra expenses and complex arrangements to address. He asked what had been learned from this so that it wouldn’t happen again in subsequent phases of the project. Ms. Cruikshank responded that, although a review of that process had not yet happened, it would, and that there would be an internal review to identify why it had happened and to prevent it from negatively impacting other researchers in coming phases.

Senator McCooch asked if the Master Planner’s office was involved with using traffic patterns to configure stop lights. Ms. Cruikshank answered that her group oversaw landscape architecture, that parking and traffic fell under University facilities, and that it all fell under public safety—but that traffic lights specifically weren’t in their purview (but that all of the above offices worked together with the same ends). Senator McCooch continued the logic of her first question by commenting that there was a noticeable problem on [state route] 195 going south, and that the problem seemed to be in the timing of the lights, which resulted in stopping traffic rather than allowing it to move through the intersections. In particular, the junction at Mirror Lake was a problem, and traffic there was sometimes at
a standstill—which is notable in Storrs, Connecticut. Ms. Cruikshank responded that unfortunately, the state DOT [Department of Transportation] controlled all the signaling on route 195. She thought that a review of the traffic and light sequences had been done recently—6 months ago—but that she had made note of the concern and would follow up.

Senator Berkowitz asked whether the Buildings and Grounds had any influence on this [master plan]? Did faculty, students and staff have input? Ms. Cruikshank said that [her group] had talked about just that and recalled that in 2015, there had been extensive input from all parts of the [University] community, and that current projects were still executing plans from that time. She added that the University is still executing projects related to NextGen CT funding. Her group, she added that her group reports to the SEC and to the [BOT-Senate] Building and Grounds, and Environment Committee, but acknowledged that they hadn’t held town halls in quite a while. They have talked to the Provost about where they want to go with this [continuing work, completion of previous plans] and whether it is time to do further research—that all of this was under discussion.

Dr. Seth stated she had 2 questions. [1] She asked about the planned supplemental utility plant, specifically: how much energy to be produced by this plant is essential for the Science 1 [of 3] phase [of construction]? Ms. Cruikshank answered that everything being put in during the first phase was essential for the third. Chilled water would be needed for the Gant 2 phase of the project. Phase 1, she said, is required; and we are still awaiting funding for Phase 2. [2] Dr. Seth followed by asking whether there had been any consideration given to the carbon emissions of the supplemental utility plan in light of the University’s action plan to reduce its carbon footprint? She asked if that had been considered in the 2015 master plan? Ms. Cruikshank answered that it had been considered in the planning. She didn’t have the numbers off-hand, but she referred to a feasibility study, a paper study on the supplemental utility plant, the work of two engineering firms on the plan. She then noted that in 2015 they had no idea what size [of energy source] they would need and that it would have been impossible to project that at that time. We have, she informed the Senate a report on sustainability in the master plan (which has many appendices). She stated that this issue could be returned to, especially as things are changing rapidly; updates may be needed.

Senator Vokoun asked when the “point of no return” was for groups that wanted to draw attention to these [climate impact, sustainability] issues. When, he asked, do these plans get cemented? Ms. Cruikshank remarked that there were numerous timelines she could answer with. She asked: what is the research agenda? Is it possible to do everything [needed] in existing buildings? The most sustainable building doesn’t get built; we’re not likely to tear down [for example] Gant. We need to balance [gains and losses] in square footage. NextGen, she emphasized, only adds half of what “UConn 2000” added [in terms of square footage]. If we’re not building new, she pondered, if we are going to focus on renovating existing space with labs (and what kind of labs? Wet? Dry? Hybrid?), perhaps five years. We don’t have to do [Phase 2]. But what would it give us? The campus could rely on itself rather than Eversource for power. She concluded by noting we would exceed what we are able to produce [in power] by the time we finish construction for Gant 3 (beyond what the cogeneration plant might produce). She asked, is there another way to
produce power? Do we continue to buy at premium cost from Eversource? There are many issues, many tentacles, to this.

Senator Gibson noted that our new President has committed to increasing the University’s research profile, but that there was not a lot of new space. Was adding a fourth floor to Gant a possibility? Ms. Cruikshank answered that is was a possibility, that they were looking at projections of increasing costs to do that. There were monies set aside for this, but they were assessing how feasible/practical it was. They are hoping the structural conclusions make this a good solution.

Ms. Cruikshank thanked the Senate for giving her the chance to speak.

11. New Business [This section was mis-numbered in the Agenda; it is corrected here.]

There was no new University Senate business introduced.

Dismissal of the Senate

Moderator called for a motion to dismiss the Senate. Senator Long made the motion to dismiss. Senator Fang seconded the motion.

The Senate voted unanimously to dismiss the Senate.
The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

These notes are submitted by Susanna Cowan, Senate Secretary.

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE [SEC]

Veronica Makowsky, Chair Justin Fang Angela Rola
Carol Atkinson-Palombo Hedley Freake Priyanka Thakkar
Rajeev Bansal Andrea Hubbard Jaci Van Heest
Nancy Bull Debra Kendall

The following members were absent from the September 9, 2018 meeting:

Alpay, Pamir Chandy, John* Pratto, Felicia
Andrew, Sheila Fitch, R. Holly Trumbull, Nathaniel*
Barrett, Edith Kazerounian, Kazem Wilson, Cristina
Brown, Stuart* Lillo-Martin, Diane* Wilson, Suzanne*
Bull, Nancy Nanclares, Gustavo* Zurolo, Mark

*Members who gave advance notice of absence