1. **Call to order and Approval of Minutes of the April 26, 2021 University Senate Meeting**

   Moderator Deans called the University Senate to order at 4:01 p.m.

   With no objections or amendments, the minutes of the April 5, 2021 Senate meeting were accepted as distributed.

2. **Report of the President – Presented by President Tom Katsouleas**

   The President congratulated Del Siegle on his election to Chair of the Senate Executive Committee; he thanked Senator Carol Atkinson-Palombo for her service in this role.

   He then remarked that the residential part of the semester had ended, and we could declare victory for a successful semester and asked Senators to give themselves a round of applause for this success.

   On the pandemic front, he noted that the pandemic continued to trend in the right direction, a result of plans laid in the fall. The University was now offering vaccines to every UConn employee. 93% of courses were slated to be in person in fall ’21. He mentioned an upcoming report on re-entry to be released May 24 on the former Covid-19 website, which would be repurposed as a site to guide the transition back to campus.

   He acknowledged the stress of returning in person and asked that we allow ourselves and each other a little extra time for the transition. He reminded the Senate the University had successfully faced the University’s greatest challenge while maintaining research, healthcare, and we had accomplished the highest level of in person education without requiring a shutdown. He listed the notable accomplishments of the year: the heroic work of UConn Health staff, the record fundraising year, breaking our research record, teaching evaluations up from pre-Covid semesters, and our rise in U.S. News rankings – a result mostly of peer assessment. He also highlighted our significant increase in diversity leadership and faculty. He cited the innovations developed for the pandemic such as pop-up courses and UConnect that would become permanent programs, as they have made us a better institution. Other lessons from the pandemic would also serve to return us to an institution better than before, including the Future of Learning and Future of Work initiatives.

   He elaborated on several challenges that we now feel are less overwhelming and can be addressed, including the crises of mental health care, climate change, and anti-Black and other racism and bigotry. This is an opportunity for us and other institutions to ensure
this becomes an inflection point on racism and bigotry, which is not only a social crisis but also public health one. An initiative spearheaded by two students on climate change had provided us a roadmap. He acknowledged some obstacles ahead in this work but confirmed a report being written this summer would go to the Board of Trustees in the fall. Work to address isolation and other mental health issues during the pandemic and the Presidential working group on mental health made this challenge also feel less overwhelming to address.

Regarding the block grant and our ongoing challenge of unfunded legacy costs, he shared the good news that the legislature’s Appropriations Committee has restored our block grant to its previous level, plus an added $5m. Additionally, the state was providing $7.5m toward relieving the burden of unfunded legacy costs. This is a positive step toward reducing fringe benefit costs to the level of our peers, something we’ve been funding temporarily ourselves. Additionally, they had approved our continuing capital projects that were already funded and would contribute $30m to deferred maintenance at UConn Health, something they have not supported in years. Finally, the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee—against all odds, he noted—had granted UConn a bigger role in economic recovery and jobs creation, funding ten new innovation professors, which along with seed funding would start at $46m over five years. These recommendations now go to the General Assembly. If passed, it will be a huge step forward and may allow us to build on philanthropic contributions and perhaps brand an innovation academy at UConn.

He concluded by noting the great accomplishment of the day: we had gone from having one member three in the National Academic of Sciences to three members, with the appointment of two UConn School of Medicine faculty, Laurinda A. Jaffe and Cato T. Laurencin, to its membership. He noted that Laurencin held the rare achievement of being the first surgeon in history elected a member of all three national academies (Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine).

Moderator Deans invited questions for the President.

Senator Long, referring to the strategic goal of doubling research in ten years, asked if the President could reiterate what he meant by “doubling research,” specifically in terms of research that was not grant-based. President Katsouleas reemphasized that the goal was to double both research and scholarship and that there was no single metric for this, as it varied by discipline. External awards, for example, were meaningful in the arts, as was publication in top-rated journals in business fields. In lab-based sciences, it was difficult to make significant contributions without resources from funding, so funding acted as a surrogate for research activity. If we double on all fronts we care about and judge faculty on, we will be a better university and reach our goal.
Senator **Majumdar** asked about the status of discussions in the legislature’s Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee regarding unfunded legacy costs. The **President** answered that nothing passed out of that committee. We had asked for help with unfunded legacy costs, which was trending at about $30m at Storrs plus Regional Campuses and 50 up to 60 at UConn Health. We did not get the full relief we needed, but we did get the $7.5m from the Appropriations Committee.

Senator **Bedore** wondered, given news of other public universities requiring students to be vaccinated for the fall, what the status of that conversation was at UConn. President **Katsouleas** answered that it was a topic of much discussion in leadership and was an evolving conversation. We have been guided by our principles in our policy, focusing on doing everything necessary to ensure the safety and health of our University community and the public. Although vaccinating all students was one approach, there were other possible approaches (strong voluntary compliance combined with weekly testing for the unvaccinated) that might prove as safe, although not necessarily a better solution than vaccination. Requiring vaccination is not possible, according to the state Commissioner of Health, so long as the vaccines have only provision approval. Once approval changes, we might be able to require Covid vaccination in the way we do for MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) and others. Stay tuned, this is evolving. We will do whatever is required to protect faculty, staff, and students.

Senator **Lillo-Martin** asked what options there would be for faculty who found in-person classes unfeasible. President **Katsouleas** answered that there would remain accommodations and exceptions for health reasons. We don’t yet know what all the options will be – this is a topic of discussion in the Future of Work committee. There are already processes in place to support accommodations for medical circumstances. This and other decisions will appear on the revamped Covid, now Re-Entry, when it goes live May 24. **Lillo-Martin** asked about situations when remote teaching might be a preference, not a medical requirement, for students or faculty. The **President** answered that we were as of now 93% scheduled in person for the fall. To the extent that there were online course offerings, students would be able to do remote classes, but the majority of students would not be able to complete degree work online (outside of specific online-only degrees such as the MS in Accounting).

Senator **Vokoun** asked about the end of telecommuting and the return to campus, specifically would it be a phased return. The **President** responded that the dates were fewer dictates than tools for individual planning. Somewhere around August 15, many staff and faculty will return. More details will appear on the new (repurposed) Re-Entry website. Some jobs and roles will need to return earlier in order to prepare for the semester. Decisions will be area by area and people should stay in touch with their supervisors regarding details.
3. Report of the Senate Executive Committee – Presented by SEC Chair Carol Atkinson-Palombo

See attached report from the Senate Executive Committee

Senator Atkinson-Palombo took time to thank those who support the function of the Senate and its meetings, including Moderator Deans, Parliamentarian Siegle, Secretary Cowan, and with special appreciation, Senate Administrator Cheryl Galli.

Moderator Deans invited questions for Senator Atkinson-Palombo.

Senator Douglas asked why students were excluded from voting for the Senate Executive Committee and committees. Senator Atkinson-Palombo, with the Senate’s permission, called on Senate Administrator Cheryl Galli to respond. Galli explained that this resulted from the fact that faculty and staff Senators were elected, whereas undergraduate and graduate students were appointed by their own governance bodies. The University (not Senate) By-laws state that the SEC members are voted in by elected members. Regarding the slate from the Nominating Committee, it is a timing issue. Elections for the committee include everyone who will be voting in the next year’s Senate. Student members start July 1, so not in time for this election. This issue may need to be addressed. Senator Douglas clarified that he was asking whether exclusion from the SEC election was intentional and would SEC be willing to look into it? Galli answered it was not an intentional exclusion but resulted from the language of the University By-laws. We could ask the Board to change this language.

Senator M. Wagner was recognized and read a statement expressing deep gratitude for the work of Senator Atkinson-Palombo as Chair of the Senate Executive Committee.

4. Consent Agenda Items

See attached Senate Standing Committee and Subcommittee Reports:

- Annual Report of the Curricula and Courses Committee
- Annual Report of the Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee
- Annual Report of the Enrollment Committee
- Annual Report of the Faculty Standards Committee
- Annual Report of the General Education Oversight Committee
- Annual Report of the Growth & Development Committee
- Annual Report of the Scholastic Standards Committee
- Annual Report of the Student Welfare Committee
- Annual Report of the University Budget Committee
Moderator Deans asked if anyone wished to speak to the accuracy of any of the presented reports.

Senator Douglas asked to confirm that the rosters had been corrected to indicate where undergraduate and graduate students were Senate members. Senate Administrator Galli confirmed the corrections had been made.

In response to a point of information from Senator Majumdar, Moderator Deans reiterated that the Senate would first vote to approve submitted committee reports; questions for committee chairs would follow the vote.

Moderator Deans initiated the vote on the slate of committee reports.

The slate of committee reports passed: 59 Yes; 0 No; 2 Abstentions.

5. Q&A on Annual Reports

Moderator Deans opened the floor for questions on the committee reports, stating that procedurally, the Senate would automatically defer to committee chairs for response.

Senator Majumdar asked to put on record a response to a section in the Enrollment Committee report. He stated his concern about the paragraph in the report that discussed how newly developed online infrastructure could be used to boost enrollment, and that traditional enrollment constraints such as classroom sizes could be outdated due to dual modalities of remote and in-person instruction. He asserted that this created the false assumption that online courses meant classes could be scaled to any size, whereas course size was a result of pedagogical considerations. Modes should be leveraged to increase access and number of sections, but class size should not vary with mode or it will result in diminished learning, a fact unchanged by the pandemic.

Senator Majumdar required no response, but the committee’s chair, Senator McCutcheon, acknowledged it was a good comment and had not been directly considered by the committee. They had written that section thinking about Covid restrictions and opportunities to maintain enrollment. They had also discussed certificate programs and online modalities as offering different options for student learning, especially in the face of declining numbers of high school graduates. Opening up dual modalities was meant to bolster enrollment, but it had not been meant to open the floodgates of class size. He was happy to work with the committee to revise the wording.

Senator Schultz asked Senator Anwar, chair of the Growth and Development Committee, about the report’s description of research-oriented administrators speaking to how they supported grants. Would these “consultations” continue and would the committee prepare a report based on these suggestions for how to increase success in obtaining large grants. Senator Anwar responded that they did plan to continue these
discussions, and that they were working on a separate document that details strategies for ways to increase grant capabilities, which should come in the next academic year. He hoped they could expand these discussions to other committees and viewpoints.

6. **Report from the Senate Nominating Committee – Presented by Senator Ortega**

VOTE on the 2021/2022 Senate Committee Rosters.

Moderator **Deans** noted that some changes had been made to the committee rosters since the list was distributed with the agenda on April 21.

With no discussion, he moved the Nominating Committee’s report (committee rosters) to a vote.

**The report of the Nominating Committee passed: 59 Yes; 0 No; 2 Abstentions.**

7. **Report from the Senate Scholastic Standards Committee – Presented by Senator Bedore**

VOTE on a motion to amend the By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the University Senate, II.H University Calendar

Moderator **Deans** invited comments and questions for Senator Bedore.

Senator **Schultz** made two wording observations: “in each” is confusing in the existing By-law language and the repetition of “required” in the proposed language is redundant. Senator **Bedore** said, to the second point, that the correction had already been made to that sentence, and that, to the first point, that language (not being within the consideration of this motion) hadn’t been considered. Moderator **Deans** confirmed that this minor correction could be made without a vote and that the slide would not be updated with that “old language” change before the vote. He confirmed the vote would be on the motion as visible on the slide, except for the small correction outside the motion, which would be made later.

Senator **Majumdar** referred to earlier discussions in the Senate about whether Saturdays and Sundays counted as reading days and recounted that student Senators had been vocal in expressing that they should not count as such. The proposed change here was unambiguous in that, referring to calendar days, meaning that instruction ending on a Friday would result in weekend reading days. Senator **Bedore** answered that they had been asked only to consider what comprised appropriate activity for a reading day, not their placement. When Senator **Majumdar** asked for a clear declaration of whether what he described was so, Senator **Bedore** responded that it was not pertinent to this motion and she was not therefore prepared to respond.
Senator Douglas also asked about the placement of reading days and wondered why it was not relevant to this discussion. He asked for confirmation that this motion would allow weekend reading days. Senator Bedore answered that the committee had not investigated this question and that she couldn’t speak for the committee in this matter.

Senator Morrell asked for clarification about the changes made to the motion. The original had specified no class activity, but this version named only assessments and submission of work. Why did it not read “any course-related activity”? Senator Bedore clarified that, if a paper (for example) were due on a Monday, an instructor might add the option of the paper being turned in on a reading day. The emphasis was on restricting required activity. The committee had not wished to micromanage classes. Senator Morrell asked, then, why it couldn’t say “not require any course-related activity”? Senator Bedore replied that the committee had not wanted to go beyond the remit of the charge.

Senator Neville commented on the recurring problem students described of professors not respecting limits on reading days. Senator Bedore answered that this was precisely the purpose of this motion, which, if approved, will clearly state what activities are not allowed on a reading day.

Senator Morrell offered an example of his concern: a professor holding a meeting on a reading day and saying they would give points for participation. This wouldn’t be an assessment or an assignment, but to get the points, students would be required to attend the class meeting. Senator Bedore responded that anything graded counts as an assessment; reading days were to be used for optional, not graded, activities. Senator Morrell countered that it didn’t specify “no instructional activity.” Senator Bedore answered that the committee hadn’t wanted to prevent optional office hours or review sessions, that they hadn’t wanted to prevent productive activities that supported students. Senator Bedore and Morrell each noted the force of the word “required.”

Senator Long called the question, but Senator Douglas called a point of order, noting that his hand was up to comment on the motion. Parliamentarian Siegle confirmed that Senator Douglas should be called on to speak before any motion was made.

Senator Douglas proposed an amendment to the motion, suggesting the removal of the language about assessments and assignments due and substitute the phrase “shall not require any course-related activities.” Senator Majumdar seconded the motion to amend. Moderator Deans opened discussion on the proposed amendment.

Senator McCoolch commented that the word “assessment” was still needed, as some instructors might not interpret “activities” as including assessment.

Senator Ceglio suggested keeping the original language and adding “any course-related activity.”
Moderator Deans asked if this was a proposed amendment to the amendment?

Senator Ceglio said she was arguing for the addition of words instead of removing any. She confirmed that she was proposing an amendment to the amendment, that the motion should read “any course related activity, assessments, or submission of work.” Senator McCoach seconded the amended amendment.

Moderator Deans invited discussion of this amendment to the amendment.

Senator Anwar commented that this would prohibit a study period and that it made better sense before. This would curtail the ability to assist students in related activity.

Senator Douglas expressed support for the amended amendment. This eliminated confusion.

Moderator Deans opened the vote on the amendment to the amendment (to include “any course related activity” to the existing language).

The amendment to amendment passed: 24 Yes; 11 No; 5 Abstain.

Moderator Deans opened the vote on the amendment to the motion, as successfully amended by the previous vote.

The amended motion (incorporating second amendment) passed: 37 Yes; 3 No; 0 Abstentions.

Moderator Deans returned discussion to the motion, as amended.

Senator Morrell noted that “course-related” should be hyphenated. Moderator Deans allowed that as a minor, non-substantive change (the change was made).

Moderator Deans opened the vote on the motion, as amended.

The amended motion passed: 46 Yes; 4 No; 3 Abstentions.

VOTE on the motion to amend the By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the University Senate, II.A.4, High School Students and Credit Bearing Courses

Moderator Deans opened the floor for any discussion prior to the vote on this second motion from the committee.

With no discussion, Moderator Deans moved to the vote on the motion.

The motion passed: 48 Yes; 1 No; 2 Abstentions.

Moderator Deans asked if there was any new business and announced that there was already one new item from the Scholastic Standards Committee. There was no additional new business.
8. Annual Report on Retention and Graduation – Presented by Nathan Fuerst, Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management

See attached report provided by the VP for Enrollment Planning and Management

Moderator Deans invited questions for Vice President Fuerst.

Senator Long asked about transfer completion rates what types of institutions students transferred from. VP Fuerst answered that the data about transfer completion may not represent a softening, as it may simply reflect something that has been happening for some time. Depending on when students transfer, there were complex calculations used to determine their time to degree. Having said that, we do not see completion in four years for transfer students. About a third of transfer students come from community colleges. Another third comes from other state institutions such as the CSUs. The last third comes from everywhere else. He noted that as a result of the community college system’s merger, we would have to completely redo our credit acceptance course conversions, which was both an opportunity and a challenge. He would be sharing more on that.

Senator Schultz asked about regional campus students. He said he understood we weren’t interested in benchmarking with Storrs, but regardless, retention was lower at those campuses. He asked if they had done more granular analysis comparing students who stay longer at regional campuses to students who transfer to the main campus: does retention fall off if they transfer? This would be useful for student interventions. VP Fuerst answered that it had been studied in the past, and they could do so again. Five or six years ago they had surveyed students about their intended target for their degree. They had found that regional campus students were much more likely to have no intention of completing their degree at UConn. We do pretty well with students starting elsewhere and converting to UConn; we benchmark that against the CSUs. Comparing regional campus students to Storrs students is not straightforward; the intentions of students are very different. This could be studied further.

Senator Rubega asked about the financial aid data slide. Do we analyze unmet financial needs? Who occupies that slice on the pie chart? Does it encompass underrepresented minorities? VP Fuerst said they had looked but they had not done a deep dive into the data. He said they could share that the average gift day award amounts are higher for under-represented groups, but he acknowledged that didn’t explain the “unmet” part of the pie chart. Senator Rubega supported the idea of further analysis of self-help and unmet need could be important, given that a larger gift does not necessarily mean it is proportionally large enough. VP Fuerst agreed it was a good suggestion.

Senator Lillo-Martin asked about corresponding figures for disabled students, as it would be helpful to see breakdowns of the data including that population and their
9. New Business
Moderator Deans invited Senator Bedore to present a motion from the Senate Scholastic Standards Committee.

Senator Bedore presented a motion on an extension of the increased credit limit for non-degree students. This motion would extend the higher 12-credit limit (up from 8) through the 2021-22 academic year.

Moderator Deans invited comment.

Senator Douglas voiced support for the amendment and asked why the limit had ever existed. Senator Bedore said it existed for several reasons, one of which was to protect dismissed students, as it would intentionally slow them down in acquiring credits toward readmission, increasing the likelihood that they would succeed. There were also financial benefits, as it was less costly to take non-degree credits because other fees were greatly reduced. However, there was no financial aid available for non-degree students, so there were pros and cons to this aspect.

Moderator Deans opened the vote on the proposed motion to extend this temporary By-laws change through the next academic year. Because it was a proposed By-laws change introduced in the same meeting as the vote, it would need a 2/3 vote to pass.

The motion from Scholastic Standards passed: 49 Yes; 2 No; 0 Abstentions.

Moderator Deans invited a motion to adjourn the final Senate meeting of the year. Senator Long made the motion, which was seconded by Senator Morrell.

The meeting adjourned by general and boisterous assent at 5:52 p.m.