

Student Welfare Committee Meeting
March 5, 2020

Meeting began at 2:05 PM.

Attendance and Introductions

In attendance: Maureen Armstrong, Gerry Berkowitz, Peter Gogarten, Andrea Hubbard, Angela Rola, Cinnamon Adams, Rebecca Bacher, Kelly Bartlett, Katherine McCarthy, Jennifer Tibbetts, Kay Gruder, Sara Harrington, Tina McCarthy, Morty Ortega, Danel Pfeiffer, Merry Ryer, Kanu Caplash, Terrence Abney, Maria-Luz Fernandez

Not in attendance: Donna Korbel, Michael Gilbert, Kelly Kennedy, Dela Tarpeh, Alexis Boylan

Review and approval of February meeting minutes

Morty motioned for approval, Andrea seconded, approved.

Update on Coronavirus (Tina)

- Situation is ever-evolving and University is being pushed to share information
- SHAW has been reaching out to folks who have been pulled from study abroad to clarify their next steps, provide reassurance, discuss impact on family members, etc.
- Coronavirus hotline has been helpful for students
- Individuals should take responsibility for their own social distancing and allow for flexibility if folks are staying home from class/work, etc.
- Hearing things that are discriminatory and concerning
- Communicating best practices for dealing with germs (e.g. making sure surfaces are wiped down clean, not shaking hands, etc.) - ERIS guidelines
- Supplies/resources like Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer are limited
- Upper administration is using CDC Threat Level 3 as baseline for recalling students/faculty abroad
- Possibility for public town hall for students about Coronavirus? USG interest
 - Maureen can pass on the information to folks who are producing the publications
- Two email communications are being sent out: one to faculty to encourage them to be flexible, one to students to encourage them to stay home if they are not well
 - Maureen will ask if this can be sent to TAs as well
- Reminder that people with fever should be fever-free for 24h without medicine before being in public
- General advice - continue checking SHAW website and information from the CDC

Rae Alexander, Director of International Student and Scholar Services

Needs and issues of international students and how to support them

- Rae is Director of ISSS; previously worked with international students at regional campuses
- UConn has seen an increase in international student population in the last five years, especially undergraduates

- ISSS serves matriculated students as well as exchange students, graduated students on OPT (visa sponsorship), and visiting researchers and faculty and their family members (visa sponsorship)
- Does a lot of visa advising and immigration compliance
- Reports to the government every semester
- Advising services at Storrs, Stamford, Business, Law
 - Individual problem-solving, directing students to resources, case resolution, etc. that might affect their immigration status
- Help students navigate life in the US and university policy
- Identify “at-risk” students by monitoring mid-term warning list and doing outreach
- Connect students to other students and help them find community through social programs (coffee hour, bus trips, Worldfest)
- Resources for academic departments
- Programs to help welcome students and help facilitate their life in the US (welcoming committee, airport transportation)
- Support for families - supporting students whose parents cannot attend graduation
- Baby clothes program
- Access to services that might be overwhelming (8843 party for taxes and VITA program/access to online software for students to file taxes)
- Driving and setting expectations/AAA driving classes
- Student leadership opportunities (student advisory board, Worldfest committee, graduate orientation leaders, welcome initiatives)
- Coronavirus and crisis management (e.g. Hong Kong in the fall, Iran at the beginning of this semester) - typically if there is a world event happening, ISSS identifies the students who might be impacted and will respond
- Biggest challenge is finding ways to reach undergraduate students
- Office located in McMahan Hall, main level (above dining hall, below residence hall)
- Support for students who are graduating and support for students who are unable to travel and staying over the summer (working with Residential Life to assess the need)
- Options for students who graduate and do not have anywhere to go
- Exploring putting graduation online (multiple ceremonies)
- Revisiting how to support students through Coronavirus/illness: Do students know how their health insurance work, where to go if they are feeling well, how to find a PCP in the area, etc.?
- Significant decrease in international high school students
- Advising students who are traveling: buy tickets with insurance and think carefully about international travel plans (e.g. might be okay to leave, but is there an advisory to come back?)
- Emotional concerns - generally okay but some frustration that UConn is not taking it as seriously as other countries
- Academic concerns - not doing well because they came late or missed class to self-quarantine; if they drop a class they will be out of visa compliance
- Resources to address stress and wellness - adapted to different cultural lenses
- Things SWC can do: food security and financial resources, especially for graduate students and students whose families have been affected by Coronavirus
 - Reminder that DOS is actively offering the UConn Swipes program

- Rethinking about how the community talks about programming (so many options, leads to folks choosing nothing)
- Social media and negativity toward Chinese international students
- Advocate for students having health insurance plans, access to legal services

Update re: Bookworms Cafe hours during finals

- Will extend hours during finals week, mostly til 1 AM
- We will see how it goes and can get more data if need be

Next meeting:

- Karen McComb, Director of Health Promotion and Community Impact
- Maggie Silver, Deputy Chief
- Bookstore

Meeting ended at 3:15 PM.