

Student Life Committee Meeting-20260219_154340-Meeting Recording

February 19, 2026, 8:43PM

1h 23m 8s

 **Pollard, Bryan** 0:04

OK, I've got 4:00 on the on the button. So I'd like to call the February 19, 2026 Student Life Committee meeting to to order. Bryan, Brianna, if you could take the roll call of committee members, that'd be great.

 **Zecchini, Brianna** 0:23

Absolutely. Good afternoon, everyone. Vice Chair Bryan Pollard.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 0:29

Here.

 **Zecchini, Brianna** 0:29

Trustee Shari Cantor.

 **Shari Cantor** 0:31

Here.

 **Zecchini, Brianna** 0:33

Trustee Andrea Dennis Levine. I don't see yet. Trustee Sean Dunn.

 **Dunn, Sean** 0:40

Here.

 **Zecchini, Brianna** 0:41

Trustee Fabio Sacamano.

 **Saccomanno, Fabio Roberto** 0:45

Here.



Zecchini, Brianna 0:45

And trustee Diane Whitney.



DW Diane Whitney 0:48

Here.



Zecchini, Brianna 0:49

Vice Chair Pollard, you have a quorum.



PB Pollard, Bryan 0:52

Excellent. Bryan, if you, Brianna, if you could take a call of the Senate representative, please, that'd be great.



Zecchini, Brianna 0:59

Of course, Representative Tina McCarthy. I do not see her online yet, but I will notify you if she joins.



PB Pollard, Bryan 1:07

OK, that's great. And Chairman Toscano, I sometimes he joins, but I don't see him either.



Zecchini, Brianna 1:10

I I do not see him. I will let you know if he joins.



PB Pollard, Bryan 1:14

OK, great. All right. So now that we've confirmed that we have a quorum, I'll call the meeting to order. Our first item on the agenda is the opportunity for public comment. We have one person who has signed up to address the student life. Committee that's Mia Giancola and as a reminder to the committee, the. Public comment phase is an opportunity for members of the community to, you know, share their their views or some ideas. But it's it's doesn't. There's no formal discussion that we're going to have after. It's really just an opportunity to hear from a member of our community and then after we've had the information. And we'll take that offline and and discuss it and and take any action items that we

deem appropriate after having heard the the presentation. So Mia, thank you so much for coming to the meeting today and and joining us. We are. Anxious to hear what what you have to say and and really just welcome. So it's all yours.

GM **Giancola, Mia** 2:25

Yeah. Thank you, Bryan. Oh, can everybody hear me OK? Yeah. OK. So my name is Mia Giancola. I use she, her pronouns, and I'm a student with a disability. I'm here before you to talk about a Disability Cultural Center at the University of Connecticut.

PB **Pollard, Bryan** 2:29

Yes.

GM **Giancola, Mia** 2:40

This initiative was unanimously supported by a university student government resolution at their February 11th meeting. The Disability Pride movement has been rapidly growing since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, its driving statement. There can be nothing about us without us.

I believe that UConn can help lead this. There are 20 other disability cultural centers across the nation, with 12 more in progress. This includes our peer institution of University of Maryland College Park, which was approved by the President in 2021. I distributed a needs assessment to members of all campuses, graduate and undergraduate.

It has been active for 27 days. This survey was confidential and voluntary. This received 897 responses. 27% were sophomores, 33% were freshmen. According to a stratified sample, 33% of students at the Storrs campus identified as having a Disability or significant mental health diagnosis. 89% of students supported the proposal. I would like to emphasize that this would be entirely separate from the Center for Students with Disabilities, which manages accommodations. We will focus on disability pride.

Community, mentorship and advocacy.

I had a student tell me that disability should not be celebrated since it has placed such a burden on their life. This is a result of the society that is not made for them. The qualitative feedback was coded into having a like minded community, having a safe, quiet, inclusive space.

Advocacy, awareness and expression, and providing a resource for fellow Huskies. I've conducted 38 interviews, heard 38 stories, 38 individuals who volunteered their time to support future UConn. Even though this is just a proposal, students have emailed me every day to say how grateful they are.

That they feel seen. Students who can't study without a quiet space. Students who are skipping class because they're overstimulated. Students who want academic notice looking for a community with similar struggles. This proposal will attract more prospective students with disabilities to the university.

I'm happy to see what we can achieve when the student body, allies and a historically marginalized, overlooked minority group steps forward with the support of their university administration. If this moves forward, it is not because of me, but every member of the student body who came together.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Student Life Committee.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 5:14

Yeah, you're more than welcome. Thank you so much for your presentation today and thank you for taking the time to come to the committee.

Thanks again.

OK, so our next item is to approve the minutes of our meeting that was held in November and November 13th. May I ask for a motion and a second to approve the minutes from our November 13, 2025 meeting?

 **Diane Whitney** 5:43

Uh, so move.

 **Dunn, Sean** 5:46

Second Dunn.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 5:48

Thank you. All in favor, say aye.

 **Diane Whitney** 5:51

Bye.

 **Shari Cantor** 5:51

I.

 **Andrea** 5:52

Hi.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 5:53

Any oppo? Any opposed?

Abstentions.

OK. So the motion passes. We'll now move on to regular business and the next item on the agenda is the standing updates. We'll have an update from.

Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, Nathan First and also from our student Trustees. So now I'll turn it over to Nathan.

 **Fuerst, Nathan** 6:21

Thank you, Vice Chair Pollard and good to see everybody again today. I have a few updates for you. Of course, we're going to hear from from Jim Lowe a little bit later on about career readiness and life skills as well as Mona Lucas and Suzanne Peters about the impact to financial aid as a result of the one big beautiful bill. So we're excited to hear more about.

Those particular topics, there's a few things I just put on the radar of our board. We have had three student deaths so far this semester and that is an early high number for us.

And I just wanted to put on everybody's radar that on April 20, 22nd, there will be a memorial service for all those part of our community that have been lost. So if you want to flag that, we would welcome trustees to attend that and participate and we'll get you more information as that becomes.

Becomes available. So one of our students was was a graduate student. Actually two of our our students were were graduate students and then an undergraduate student as well and really has called the attention to also the ongoing conversations around mental health.

And perhaps at a future meeting, we'll have more opportunities to talk about that and and the strengths of our student health and Wellness initiatives, being a JED campus and a health promoting university as well as maybe some of the activity that

happens through our means restriction committee.

Which is a committee that is has a is designated to address risks of of harm to self around the university campuses. So there's a lot going on there, a lot for us to share, but it's good for this group to know that we have professionals and individuals that have been tasked with this that.

Do this work and regularly survey where there may be risks of harm to self across the university. So a lot to know about that topic, but in light of recent events, I didn't want to let let it pass in terms of an opportunity.

To mention it here, and I know many of us have had offline conversations about that as well. So another thing that I would share is that the university recently reissued and updated some guidance around the potential for immigration activity on campus and what to do in the instance.

That there would be such an operation or or immigration activity on campus. There's an infographic of sort that was developed first out of our student activities area. So credit to them for taking the initiative and putting a first draft of that together. But now it has been something that has been reviewed by senior leadership and pushed out to the community and includes.

Steps like if if there's an officer on campus that we would first if whoever's in charge of the event would let them know that we have to contact public safety and we would do so and then we would escalate in advance the concern to.

A supervisor as well. So really working to try and make sure that people are informed of what to do in that particular instance and of course hoping that we would will never have to use it. Just to be clear, today there has been no known activity.

On our campus. So it's important for everybody to know and to hear our Dean of students and other areas of the university, the Graduate School, ISSS, our International Students and Scholar Services.

And other offices, Shaw have been engaged with students that are encountering challenges either in their day-to-day or for that matter at at home. And sometimes that's far away, right? So with regard to the crisis in Iran, as an example, our teams are working directly with students that are.

Impacted and trying to provide them support wherever appropriate as they have family members that are going through an incredibly challenging time back home, to say the least. So just know that as these global incidents happen, our teams leap to action and we come together. We identify impacted students.

And we reach out to them to provide support, whatever that may be, not knowing

what what it may be in certain instances. So, so we work together across various areas to do that. And then the last thing that I wanted to share with the committee today was that we're nearing the release of admissions.

And financial aid decisions for the fall 2026 entering class. The Storrs campus application deadline passed on January 15th. Our admissions team has done all the work of reading every single one of those applications and our committee is is meeting to finalize.

Those decisions. Likewise, our financial aid team is is busy evaluating the financial need of of this class of students and building their financial aid awards such that they can finance their college education and that will go out, we anticipate on March 1st or shortly before. So it's always a very exciting.

A deciding time for the university and of course for for all the students as they go through that. Regional decisions will be rolled out at the same time for those students that have already applied. Just note that the deadline for applicant applying for admission to our regional campuses is not until May 1, and in fact students can continue to apply to the Storrs campus as a late application.

Can too. So if you have anybody that realizes all of a sudden they didn't get their application or are still interested, send them our way. We would love to take a look at them and give them some consideration.

Those are my updates for today and with that I am happy to turn it over to trustee Sean Dunn.



Dunn, Sean 12:14

Thank you, Nathan. So I want to take a moment to thank Mia, who spoke in public comment today and just the work that she's put in. I had the opportunity with her in soliciting hundreds of student responses and really spearheading this initiative.

Around a potential disability Cultural Center here at UConn. Excited to have future conversations, which I imagine we will inform like like today. So since our last meeting in November, I'd like to highlight a few developments.

Students have felt directly so first being housing, particularly for underclassmen and undergraduates who are entering into their final year. The 2627 housing application opened in my housing on January 1st, as Nathan mentioned.

And students have been basically been in this housing planning mode ever since.

They also there was a posted 20/26/27 contract draft as well as cancellation charts.

So it's important for undergraduates to keep in mind the language that's associated

there because it determines financial risk if things change.

Mid semester. Second, on regards to safety, security and mental health, the UConn Alert System test on January 27th is definitely a helpful prompt for students to confirm that they're enrolled. They get the proper notifications.

And so that they know what to expect in the event of an emergency. And as Nathan mentioned, the university also issued guidance about potential immigration agent interactions. So there's been no planned or confirmed visits reported, which is the, which is what community members received, but it's important to still have this.

Direction and consensus understanding of what to do in the event of an interaction. So this clear communication really matters for everyone, as obviously rumors can help spike anxiety and even disrupt attendance for students.

Undergraduates really appreciate the work that Shaw is doing and I think it's very important to keep the conversation moving, especially in regards to protective measures and continued progress, especially around, you know, clear pathways to support and making sure that.

Everyone at all campus can continue to consistently seek the care that they need, and given the losses our community has experienced, that commitment feels even more important. In regards to academics and campus climate, the University Senate extended the anti black racism.

Implementation Task Force timeline recently at the February meeting with the report now due April 23rd. So undergraduates will await to see the results of that decision and student engagement and pride have been super strong. UConn's recently highlighted entrepreneurial opportunities, continued success.

Like Innovation Quest and Hack UConn that allow students to have low barrier ways to build these real skills and networks that will extend beyond their undergraduate careers. We've also seen research highlighted through the recent December picks for this year's University Scholar Program.

And then on the spirit side, students were initially frustrated in the fall when ticket sharing rules had tightened. But the recent shift, I think just last week to allow student to student ticket transfers has really made a difference in attendance, even just yesterday despite the the heartbreaking loss.

And it will help to keep seats more filled when undergrads have obligations like labs or work or other constraints. And then lastly, student elections are underway for the undergraduate governments at each campus, as well As for the next student trustees.

So it'll be an exciting time.
um Thank you very much.

PB **Pollard, Bryan** 16:12

Thank you, Trustee Dunn, I believe.
Trustee Zacamano may have a presentation.

SR **Saccomanno, Fabio Roberto** 16:21

Hi, good afternoon everybody. Nice to see you all. I first want to take a moment to thank Mia for bringing that initiative to our attention. As a medical student, I feel that disability rights are very important to recognize and I think it's a novel and innovative idea to consider bringing a disability center as a Cultural Center to.

UConn and I also want to recognize the students whose lives we have lost in these last few months and I will make an effort to be at the memorial service in April. So to begin with the overall graduate student sort of mood, what I've heard from a lot of my classmates, both at the Health Center and then in.

The classmates I'm in contact with at the main campus and Storrs and the satellite and the other campuses. There's a lot of concern about what the student loan changes will look like come, you know, July 2026. For us at the medical school, I know some of my peers are actively.

Reconsidering specialty choices for the need to potentially take a research year versus not and to lose their legacy provision. So these loan changes, that's just one example, a very niche example, but they are sort of life changing for a large amount of students.

So that's something that I've just been hearing a lot of. As far as updates from the campuses from UConn Health, some updates I have to share were that we had two students match through the early match process. So the early match process tends to involve pretty competitive residency. So we had one student matching.

Ophthalmology and another student matched into urology, so congratulations to them. The dental students also had their residency match day in January. We had eight out of eight students who applied to oral and maxillofacial surgery match into oral and maxillofacial surgery OMFS from what I hear.

From.

Dental classmates is the hardest residency to match into coming from a DMD background and all eight of the students who applied successfully matched. 8 for a

single class is a very large and significant amount. So very proud of those dental students and then all of the dental students who matched into residency.

My class in particular for the second-year medical students, we have our research day coming up next week, so I have that here. A number of us did research projects this past summer, so we'll be presenting our results Friday of next week and we have our last exam of the didactic portion of medical school.

Next week and then we will be off to study for our first board exam and then following that we'll begin clinical rotations. So an exciting time at the Health Center.

Next slide please from the Graduate School. Some of the highlights that I have are that they will have their three-minute thesis competition.

On Wednesday, April 8th in the Dodd Center. So they had 102 submissions as part of this contest and they're working to select the 30 who will be invited to speak. Top prize for the best speaker is \$5000. So that's a pretty significant scholarship or award amount. So happy to see the university.

Supporting graduate research endeavors here. Postdoc Research Day took place in December. 27 postdocs presented their research and the top prize was awarded to a student for her research, evaluating material platforms for precision treatments of brain tumors. It's my understanding that she will be presenting eventually at a Board of Trustees.

Meeting on her research. Um.

Another update related is the Graduate Student Emergency Fellowship Fund that went live last summer. So they've had 100. They've had 526 applications to date and approved 170 of them. So there's been over \$300,000 dispersed through this program with an average imbursement disbursement of about \$1900.

Gives an idea of the kind of need graduate students are experiencing. I did go back and forth with one of the faculty administering this program, and one of the things why there's a lot of applications rejected is either students are asking for more than the \$2000 that is targeted, right? So they're.

Need is greater than what the program can provide or they have needs that the program is not designed to address. So you know it's not to say that the applications that were rejected that those students don't have need, it's just they don't have a need that this program is designed to address. So room for improvement there for sure as.

Graduate students and students across the country, you know, navigate these loan changes and financial hardship. Next slide, please.

Harley Brooke Walker is a MFA candidate in puppet arts, so she just presented her piece Darling at the Connecticut Repertory Theater. And what I was told was that this is a very significant accomplishment for a student in particular for a theater to take on their.

Their show as one of their main productions, and the Hartford Courant actually wrote a very nice article that is linked there in the slide. So congratulations to Hartley. Next slide, please. From the School of Pharmacy, I want to highlight two students who received awards this past November.

So Leila Sharifi, Saeed Najafian. So Leila received this award Pharmaceutical Discovery Development and Manufacturing and that was for her work to improve the safety of gene based therapeutics.

And then Saeed received the 1st place academic award for his presentation and research on multi-phase mixing. So that is looking at how medication manufacturers can best control different variables to produce consistent batches of medicine.

School of Pharmacy also shared their 2024 pass rates for their licensure exam called the NAPLEX. So the national average is 78% first time pass rate and UConn's pass rate was 84%. So showing strong performance from School of Pharmacy graduates.

I believe that's my last slide. I'm happy to take any questions and again, always a privilege to present here. So thank you for listening.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 22:49

OK, great. Hearing no questions. Thank you Vice President 1st and Trustees Dunn and Sacramento for your updates. Always very informative and chock full of information. So, so thank you all. So our next order of business is an update from. The Assistant Vice Associate Vice President of Student Life and Enrollment, James Lowe, who will give an update on career readiness and life skills. So, Jim.

 **Lowe, James R** 23:27

Thanks so much. We're going to actually start with a very brief video. So Brianna, I don't know if we have that teed up.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 23:33

Yep.

 **Zecchini, Brianna** 23:41

You hear the volume or now?

And should I just play it without the volume? Is that fine, Jim?



Lowe, James R 23:55

Yeah, go ahead and play it without the volume. Technology is always a challenge with these videos.



Zecchini, Brianna 23:59

Yeah.



Lowe, James R 24:00

Just as you're watching, picture in your head thumping music an exciting upbeat.

D.

And the whole thing ends with a tada. So you're going to have to, in your mind, just picture that as well. So thanks so much for that, Brianna. In the video are just a few highlights of some of the materials I'm going to present today. And when I started this, I think the deck was 38 pages and we've gotten it down to 12.

So I'm gonna talk in a hot New York minute about this stuff. It's just representative of some of the work that my team is doing around career readiness and life skills. But there's a lot more behind this, so I'd like to leave some time for QA.

But realize that this is just a very high level overview. So if you could go to the first slide, one of the things that we've been real intent on is creating an ecosystem of career readiness. Here at UConn, we realize that students don't necessarily come to the Career Center for career advice. They're going to faculty, they're going to staff, they're going to employers in some.

Cases O We've endeavored to create this environment where no matter where a student goes in their career, whether it's curricular, extracurricular, or cocurricular, there are trained and informed folks who can help them with conversations around career readiness and around.

Life post UConn. So we do that through career coaching, bringing alumni into classrooms. We have academic liaisons. We bring in employers and alumni into our classrooms to talk to the students. But the highlight of the program is really our Career Champions program. So if we go to the next slide.

We currently have 1223 trained career champions at UConn. It is the biggest program of its kind in the nation, bar none. And those career champions are

comprised of faculty, staff, alumni, employers.

And the general public as well. We do have some community members who are trained career champions. From a program impact standpoint, we found that career champions and we've surveyed them and we've been doing this over the past three years. They're 45% more familiar with the NACE career readiness competencies than non-career champions. So when.

Think about that if a student goes to a professor who's really not understanding what the career readiness competencies are that employers are looking for. And just as a step back, NACE is the National Association of Colleges and Employers and they put out every year what the top competencies the employment community is looking for in terms of undergraduate.

Stud.

In early career, we also find that career champions are 30% more often referring students to the Career Center and 48% more familiar with the career resources offered to faculty and staff than non career champions. So while that's a big number, we have a lot of folks here in our community, so we look to continue to grow that program.

We also have an online career champion resource site. We host an annual Career Everywhere conference, which is a full day conference where we train these folks. We had 120 folks at our most recent conference last year. We also have an annual awards where students nominate faculty and staff for supporting them in their career readiness and that's.

Coming up this coming May, so if you go to the next slide.

There we go. So again, NACE, which is really the the institution, they have 2800 institutions as part of their membership and close to 14,000 members. They really set the standards for career services on the university.

Level According to NACE's 2024 study, nationally, 60% of students engage with their Centers for career development or career readiness. At UConn, it's 86 and why that's helpful. We found that over 80% of our students found career services either helpful or very helpful, and the research has.

Really borne out that they're 5.8% more likely to strongly agree that UConn prepared them for post collegiate life. They're three times more likely to donate to UConn as an alumni, and they're more likely to strongly agree that their education was well worth the cost. So that 86% of the students are engaging with us and finding our. Services not only my professional staff, but also the career champions across the

university platform, not only here in Storrs, but we also have career teams in all four of our regional campuses to support students there as well. So that's a number that we're extremely proud of and we continue to try and grow that number.

So if we go to the next slide.

So it's all about connecting students to jobs. So we do have career fairs on campus. We find that about 40% of our students who do eventually get either internship or job offers are coming from interactions with employers at our career fairs. We hold about 7 big career fairs a year. Our big one is in the fall, but overall we had 600.

57 employers on campus, not only here in Storrs, but we also held career fairs in Stanford and Hartford as well, with over 8300 students attending them. We also have one-off meetings with our employers, so we had about 900 of them last year and I also have an Employer Advisory Council that consists of our 20 top employers.

That we meet with three or four times a year to learn from them. What are their needs? What are their hiring trends? What can we do better to partner with them? So this is really where it all coalesces in terms of those positive outcomes. So if we could go to the next slide.

So curriculum and academic integrations. So when I talk about extracurricular and co-curricular, we really felt a need for embedding career readiness within the curriculum itself. And over the past several years we have been able to do that through career readiness modules that are embedded right in Husky CT.

Students either self-enroll in them, or we actually have 34 undergraduate courses that are using those career readiness modules, 13 on the graduate side, and on an annual basis, about 1600 undergraduates and about 400 graduate students exposed to those career readiness modules that we've created for faculty to present in the classroom.

Itself. We also have academic liaisons. We bring alumni into the classrooms. There's a lot of activity that we realize that needs to be done in the classroom, aligned with the core curriculum that the students are experiencing, and this is the way we do it.

We did find that 9 out of 10 faculty report that students in their disciplinary area asked them on a regular basis for career advice. So we felt a real need to partner with faculty and academic departments so that they could be prepared to provide that.

Next slide.

So the Faculty Fellows Program is a program that we stood up two years ago with 14 faculty fellows over the summer and we worked with them throughout the summer to develop curriculum that was based on career readiness. And you'll see the

program impact over on the right hand side where we surveyed them pre and post. Faculty fellow training to see are they comfortable with discussing career competencies in the classroom and tying it to their academic department as well. This past summer we had 17 fellows for a total of 31.

We did do some refreshers with our first year cohort and we will continue to grow that, but that has actually impacted over 3000 students over the past two years by embedding that through our Faculty Fellows program. So that's just another example of a program that we've done that's a little bit more creative.

And we were actually recognized for this particular program at a global conference last year. That was the Ernst and Young Award for Excellence in partnering with faculty. So if we could go to the next slide.

And Brianna's going to send you out these slides because I know I'm not going through every single piece of all of them. If you want to dive a little bit deeper, one of the jewels in our crown is the one-on-one career coaching. And you'll see that every year, year over year, we were increasing the number of students that we were meeting with one-on-one until the 2425 year and that's when we instituted.

Assistive AI and integrated that into our offerings for resume development, interview practice and LinkedIn page development. So what we did was we provided those services to our students. To date, about 3700 students have engaged in that process and the plan is.

And and the model is now that they go, they get all their materials together so that when they meet with a career coach, they're not talking about basics, they're talking about more advanced things like career planning. So we go to the next slide.

Group programs. I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on this, but most of our group programs are in collaboration with either faculty, with campus groups and student groups. But we also have on-demand programming asynchronous that's available 24/7 on things like major and career exploration, job and internship research and.

And the list goes on, but we continue to impact our students in a more meaningful way and at a scalable number versus our one-on-one, which tends to be very time intensive. So next slide.

So Work Plus Work Plus is going to be the revolution of career services. So our endeavor here is to turn every single on-campus job into a results-driven internship.

So we have 6000 students on camp across our campuses working for UConn.

So we've created a program in partnership with University of Arizona through a

Gallup Strata Grant to actually transform those jobs on campus into meaningful. Career competency related, career readiness related internships and you'll see some of the student feedback from our pre work plus program surveys to our post work plus surveys. We have about 550 students in the program right now with 124 supervisors and it's all career centric about skill development.

Professional growth and very outcomes driven, but things like students are aware of NACE competencies pre work plus 43%, post work plus 83%. My supervisor was interested in my career and professional goals pre 74, post 83 and all the numbers really reflect that and really.

Aid to that sense of belonging that they're not just going to a job, they're going to a job where their supervisor cares about their future and is working intentionally with them to support them through not only their coursework, but also getting to graduation and being successful post graduation. So this is an amazing program.

We've been recognized by this for this program at the National Association of Colleges Employers just last year for their top award of Career Service Excellence. So you'll see a lot more about this program as we move forward and grow the program. Like I said, right now we're at about 550 students. The goal is over the next several years to get that number up to.

4000 students and eventually institutionalize it where all students who work on campus have exposure to it. Next slide please. So technology, just real quick, we have an amazing website. It's also nationally award-winning. We got about 700,000 page views per year on our website.

With more than 3700 visits, unique visitors, unique visits per year, we also have our 1220 platform where employers post their jobs. We have 20,000 unique logins per year to register for that particular site. So the bulk of our students, undergraduate students are actually.

Engaging with us through our platform and then like I said earlier, 3700 users signing into the AI platform called Quincia for resume development, LinkedIn development and interview prep. So next slide.

So AI tools, the only thing I'm going to talk about on this is that little graph on the right hand side. This was a survey done by Handshake, which is another career services platform and it just shows the increase in the requirement of AI competencies in jobs from 2023 to 2025.

So you can see like in marketing, it's grown precipitously as well as tech. Every single area has grown. So a lot of what we're doing right now is leaning into assisting

students with understanding AI, understanding how to articulate it on their resume because this is the biggest growing sector of career competencies.

That employers are looking for when they're looking for early career talent, and it's something that we've embraced and continue to embed into our programs. Next slide.

So alumni relations, and I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this slide, but a program that we just launched last year was our Alumni in Residence program. So we actually have right now 43 alumni who are on our website who students can actually book an appointment with to talk about industry background. We've trained all of those alumni.

We have had agreements with them. They're not giving career advice. They're educating our students on their industries and their personal success story. So that's a program that we'll look to continue. That's all automated. It's right through the system. A student can log on and book an appointment with those alumni.

Our target alumni are three to seven years out because those are the ones who resonate most with our early career talent as students are leaving UConn. I think I have one last slide.

No, now we get to the first destination. So we talked about that in the video. Very excited to share that 91% of our students had positive outcomes for the most recent graduating class, which is an enormous number. The national numbers probably won't come out for another six months.

But we've always compared very favorably to national numbers somewhere in the high 80s, eighty-six, 8788. So it'll be interesting to see. But I do know that students who actually engage with career services experience \$5000 increase in their starting salaries, 7% of them.

Said their job was either directly or very related to the their current career goals when they partnered with us, and 15% participated in at least one experiential learning opportunity if they engaged with career services. So all of that just rounds out the number from a legislative standpoint. We're always concerned. Next slide.

Slide please about are we retaining our student talent? 77% of those students from Connecticut actually stayed in Connecticut for jobs. And the highest number we've reported in the past 10 years is 24% of those students who came from out of state decided to stay right here in Connecticut for their first job contributing.

To the overall economy of the state. Next slide. And I think this is the last slide. Yep, some awards and honorable mentions. I'm not going to go through these, but we've

been recognized every year for the past eight years by either the National Association of Colleges and Employers, by Ernst and Young, the Career Leadership Collective.

Or the Eastern Association of Colleges and Employers. And my team regularly presents at national conferences on UConn's best practices, continuing the reputation of our institution. That's my last slide.

So thank you so much for bearing with me on all of that. I could have gone on for about another three hours probably on each of those slides and the other slides, but I just wanted to give you like a broad brush overview and the key take away is really that we're creating an ecosystem of career readiness here on campus and that career readiness is either for a job.

Or to persist to advanced education, either a master's doctoral degree and making sure that the students have access to all the resources that we provide, not only here on the Storrs campus, but on our regional campuses as well. And not only for undergraduate students, but we also have a robust program of support for our graduate and post.

Doc students too.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 41:20

Jim, I just want to say thank you so much for that presentation. It was phenomenal. It's very, it's very exciting.

 **Lowe, James R** 41:25

Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that, Chair Pollard.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 41:29

It's exciting to hear you know how much is available to the students and that they're taking advantage of it. So I just think it's phenomenal work and I'm really looking forward to getting the the slides and doing a deeper dive and I'll probably reach out to you with some some questions cause I I just find it fascinating. So thank you very much.

 **Lowe, James R** 41:48

Absolutely happy to do it. Any other questions?

PB **Pollard, Bryan** 41:49

1.

OK. Do any other questions?

OK. Thanks again, Jim. I really appreciate it. OK. So we'll move on to the next agenda item, which is a presentation on the financial aid implications of the one big beautiful Bill Act. We've got two people who are going to.

 **Lowe, James R** 41:58

Thank you.

PB **Pollard, Bryan** 42:15

Lead us through that discussion. We've got Suzanne Peters, who's the Director of Student Financial Aid Services, and then also Mona Lucas, who's the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment. So I will turn it over to to them for their presentation.

Thank you very much and welcome.

 **Lucas, Mona** 42:40

Thank you so much for inviting us. I have really the easy role here in this overview because Suzanne is clearly our subject matter expert. I convinced her to allow me to speak to just one point, which is really kind of some of the things that happened after the the.

Signing of the of the act. What I will say in in a way of introduction because I'm not sure if everyone has met Suzanne, but Suzanne was lured away from UMass Amherst. Back in 2017, after about a decade there. So she's been with us for a significant number of years and she knows this information inside and out. First slide, please. I just want to speak to kind of what Suzanne and her team had to do once the once once everything was signed. So they Sue and her leadership team had to do a deep dive of the information in the bill.

They had to confer with many of their external peers just to make sure they were interpreting the information the same way. Thankfully, many of the state, regional and national financial aid associations offered.

Webinars and provided some information to help institutions understand the implications. And then Sue and her team had to quickly move into data analysis so that we could at least understand what is the impact.

And then key institutional officials needed that information because I think, you know, soon after signing we started receiving inquiries and we being probably our our governmental affairs team started receiving inquiries as to the impact this was going to have.

Have on our students. The another thing Sue and her team had to do in short order was to to develop a communication plan so that students could be kept in the loop as information was understood and updates are received so that they would understand the.

The potential impacts coming our way July 1 and so having shared kind of what they did immediately after the signing, what Sue will now do is to go into the details. Of the implications, Sue.



Peters, Suzanne 45:21

Thanks, Mona. Thanks everyone. So right, so this this act was signed into law on July 4th, 2024 and the things that I'm going to cover today are Pell Grant changes, federal direct loan changes to include the both the Parent Plus loan, the Graduate Plus loan and also loan reduction.

Which easier to understand as loan proration and institutional accountability. One of the things though that I have to share is we do not have final guidance. These laws go into effect July 1, 2026 and we do not have final guidance. We anticipate receiving the actual guidance.

From the US Department of Education in the springtime, they are saying late spring, which is a great concern for us because we do have to enact this starting July 1. So everything that I'm sharing with you is our understanding of it and please keep in mind that things may change. So and also too we make it.

More details about this. So this is more of an interpretation of our like our National Association, state association, stuff like that like Mona had spoken about. Next slide. So Pell Grant changes that we have coming are so starting July 1, 2026, students will no longer be.

Eligible to receive their federal Pell Grant in excess of their estimated cost of attendance if the student is receiving grants or scholarship aid. Now historically students Pell Grant wasn't considered an entitlement program, so that meant that the student could get it in excess of their cost of attendance if they had.

All these other free monies that were not from the federal government. A good example is our student athletes. The student athlete would get an athletic grant and

aid award that covered every single expense that the student had. And if they were federal Pell Grant eligible, they would actually be eligible to receive that Pell Grant in excess of their cost of attendance.

Now, their cost of attendance includes tuition, fees, a room allowance if they're not living on campus, a food allowance if they're not living on campus, an allowance for books, transportation, miscellaneous expenses. So it's something much larger than what you would think of as their bill. So in doing our analysis like Mona.

talked about, we used the 24-25 academic year to look at that because again, remember we were in, you know, July and August of 2025. So we looked at that and we identified about 28 students that would have been negatively impacted by this had it been in effect for the

2025 year. Now we've shared that information with athletics because it was specifically student athletes that were impacted by this so that they can prepare for it and whatnot. We are hearing though some kind of good news that if we can.

Create \$1.00 of unmet cost of attendance. The student actually may be eligible for their full Pell Grant. It's a very odd thing to think about, but we'll wait until we get that guidance to know for sure if we're able to actually move forward with that.

So then the other change that's coming to our Federal Pell Grant program is the student may not have a student Aid index in excess of twice the maximum Federal Pell Grant. So that means the student Aid index can only be up to 14,790.

So with FAFSA simplification, Pell Grant eligibility was changed from being totally driven by what was called an expected family contribution to being driven by poverty tables. So based on the family household size and family income was driving what the student's eligibility would be and what was happening is we.

We're having students, not a lot. We had students that were considered pellionaires, so they would have very large student aid indexes, which means they didn't have a lot of need, but they were still Pell Grant eligible. So this change is being put into play to ensure that those very precious federal Pell Grant resources are going to the. Absolute neediest students possible. So we identified about 65 students that fell into that category and we have well over 7000 Pell Grant eligible students. So it is a small population which is good but still not good for those 66 students.

Next slide please.

So with the parent PLUS loan program starting July 1, the maximum amount a parent may borrow for a student is \$20,000 annually. Now previously what the Max was was the total cost of attendance. So all those things that I talked about minus any

financial aid the student got and the parent could borrow a PLUS loan. So now they're.

Incorporating some guardrails into this program. So this parent will also be capped at a lifetime amount of \$65,000. And what that you know, the first thing that I think of is OK, if the parent is borrowing the Max, that means they'll only be able to borrow that Max for really three years and then 5000.

Year #4. So that is, you know, a little concerning. You know, we have, we have updated our information on our site so that our incoming students are aware of this change that's coming. One of the positive things, I guess if we can find some positive things about this is there is a legacy provision in here.

So a currently enrolled dependent student who either the student or the parent has borrowed a federal direct loan can continue to borrow from this program and not be subject to the \$20,000 annual limit or the \$65,000 cap. Now that will only be for three academic years.

Or until completion of the credential, the lesser of the two. But at least there is something to help ease families into this who they when they've previously been relying on this program. So that's one positive. Next slide.

So Fabio has alluded to this change that's coming with the Graduate Plus loan program. So this one is being eliminated entirely July one. There is a legacy provision, but it is being eliminated July 1, 2026. Something that I do want to say about this, Fabio, hopefully too I'm taking this opportunity.

Is that there are lenders out there that are going to fill this gap. One in particular is the Chesila loan program. They're working on funding to create, you know, like a bridge program of sorts for students to look at to bridge that gap between the parent between the Graduate PLUS loan program.

So, but the legacy provision is very similar to the Parent PLUS Loan legacy provision. As long as the student borrowed from the Federal Direct Loan program, it did not have to be the Graduate PLUS Loan program. They could have just borrowed from the unsubsidized Federal Direct Loan program. They may continue to borrow for three years or until their credential.

Is completed. One of the challenges with this legacy provision, though, is that if the student changes their programs, so think about a medical student stepping out to do a master's in public health. That's a credential change, so they will no longer be part of that legacy provision.

Next slide please. Thought it would be important to show you some of the loan

volume related to the Graduate Plus loan program. So in the 2425 year we have 572 students take advantage of this program, of which 167 of them were first time borrowers.

So just to give you an idea and you can see right, the biggest population is the graduate program. We have since dove into that data to provide the Dean of the Graduate School a little bit more granular data with regard to what programs are taking advantage of it of the program, so.

Yeah, just sharing it for information purposes. And also to a reminder, Brianna's gonna send this out, so no need to try to write anything down. Next slide please. So this is showing you what the borrowing limits will be come July 1, 2026. So for what you're seeing is the first column is our undergraduate student population. Their annual loan limit ranges from 5500 in subsidized and or unsubsidized for federal direct.

Loan to 12,500 and that bit is based on their dependency status and year in school. Their lifetime aggregate that remains unchanged. Their lifetime aggregate remains unchanged as well. They are instituting a new lifetime limit of 257,500 for.

All academic programs. So if the student goes on to Graduate School, goes on to get a professional degree, goes on to get any other types of degrees, the maximum amount the student may borrow is going to be \$257,500. Now the next row column talks about graduate unsubsidized loans.

This has been the limit for the graduate unsubsidized loan program for a very long time, so this remains unchanged. What is new is the aggregate of \$100,000 for their graduate program.

So that's a new change. And then what what is new is the designation of a professional program. So there are a handful of programs at the University of Connecticut that are designated as professional programs and medical school, dental school, law school.

Are considered professional programs, and those students will be eligible to borrow up to 50,000 in unsubsidized federal direct loan with a lifetime or program Max of 200,000 for the professional designation. There has been some work at the university. and with our government relations team to try to work on that professional designation. There's some concerns that it left out some programs that really should otherwise be considered professional. And then of course the Parent Plus Loan program that I've already spoken about.

President Merrick, did you have a question, though?

No. OK. Next slide, Brianna. Oh, oh.

MR **Maric, Radenka** 55:44

This is so important. I just have to apologize. I have to go back to legislative session. Our students are testifying and they always make us so proud and I want to be with them. But Susan, amazing work and thank you everybody.

 **Peters, Suzanne** 55:51

OK.

Thanks.

PB **Pollard, Bryan** 56:02

Thank you, President Merritt.

 **Peters, Suzanne** 56:04

All right. So this particular piece of the act is of great concern to me, loan reduction or proration. So this is going to apply to both subsidized and unsubsidized loans where we will be obligated to prorate the student's loan.

Based on the number of credits that they are enrolled in. Historically, as long as a student was enrolled at least half time, they were eligible to borrow their annual maximum. That will no longer be the case. It will be looked at on a term by term basis and there's a retrospective.

Piece to it as well. So for example, let's choose an undergraduate student. We have a first year undergraduate student. 12 credits is considered full-time status, but if the student takes 6 credits, they will only be eligible for half.

Of their annual loan limit only half. So some of the things that I think about with this one is our students for our Center for Students with Disabilities who are getting an accommodation to take a reduced course load. They will no longer be eligible for their.

Full annual loan limit. We'll have to look at them on day 10 to determine what is the student's enrollment level and actually have to reduce their loan at that point. We're hoping further guidance comes out on this one and possibly refines it a little bit to be less punitive. Can we use enrollment?

At the time of disbursement, possibly. So this is of great concern. Now the

retrospective piece of it that really bothers me is that then in the spring we have to look back and see, did the student drop a course?

After day 10, that brought them below the minimum of 12 credits in that example. If they did, it may negatively impact their spring eligibility. So we have put comments together because there's an open.

They're accepting public comments right now. We've worked with our government relations team. We've put comments together with this, asking for this implementation to be delayed at least a year to allow for time of, you know, reviewing the actual guidance and actually then educating both our students and our faculty, our.

Staff our university community about this significant change that's coming. Some of the things that that caused me to lose sleep at night is this particular one, because when I think about like our our graduates who are on an assistantship, we consider them full-time at six credits.

That will no longer be the case for loan eligibility. We can still consider them full-time, but their loan eligibility will be based on the credits that they are actually enrolled in. And at the graduate level, the university has defined that as 9 credits per term and 12 credits per term for pharmacy. So this means we are going to have to review.

each student to ensure that their loan eligibility is tied directly to their level of enrollment and then at the end of each semester we're going to have to look retrospectively to see if that student withdrew from any of their courses. So this one is really

Particularly concerning for me. The retrospective piece really gets me. When we look at the data, there was about 1300 students that were impacted by this. That is a lot of students. And at the time we were looking at it over the academic year based on the information we had at that time and weren't aware of.

The fact that it was going to be looked at per term. So next Scott, next slide please. So institutional accountability. So there's going to be a new earnings metric where students who have graduated, they're going to be compared. Their earnings are going to be compared four years out. I think it is to that of a person with a high school diploma. So the US Department Education is going to use IRS data.

For this to find, to measure and compare income levels and then think of it as you know, a student with a graduate degree is going to be compared to an individual with an undergraduate degree. So it will be, you know what I mean? It is some years

out from now before the ramifications come into play.

But it will require warnings to students when a program does not meet the metric, which we don't know what the formula is. That hasn't been shared with us as of yet. But we have seen preliminary information that is showing that currently our programs, we don't have any programs that would be in jeopardy, but that's today. And that's also without knowing what the actual formula is. So, but a program that fails two out of the three years will actually lose eligibility for federal direct loans. So this one, this one is totally out of our hands.

What I mean by that is that we can't the income will be actually captured by the US Department of Education from the IRS. UConn can't do anything about that. And also to who they're comparing it to at first they they will compare.

To people within your state or they will compare them nationally depending upon. They will look at multiple indices to see which one the school could pass on, which is a positive. But again, without clear guidance, we really, we really don't know exactly how this will.

roll out. Um And I'm going to leave it at that. Next slide.

So what have we been doing to get this information out there? We've sent communications to students. We have created a website that is dedicated to these these changes about one big beautiful bill. We have collaborated quite extensively with government affairs on pulling data together so they can.

Respond to particular constituents and whatnot. We have presented this information to a number of organizations at the university in addition to offices, right? So we've presented to.

The, you know, Undergraduate Student Advising Council. I've gone to the Center for Students with Disabilities, Institute for Student Success. We've worked with the School of Medicine, the School of Dental Medicine. So we're doing everything we can to get the information out there. But again, I do say that, you know, without. Having final guidance, it's really challenging because we're doing a lot of speculation. I mean, I think we're going in the right direction, but right, there could be something that comes when that final guidance comes out that is of of even greater concern.

Oh, I know we're over, so I'm going to stop there.

And open it up to questions.

Are there any questions from any of the trustees or anyone on the call?

OK, so uh.

A **Andrea** 1:03:20

Mr. Chairman, this is Andrea Dennis-bean. I don't really have a question. It's just so concerning and both our part-time students as well as our neurodiverse students, it's just such a setback to what we've been trying to accomplish here.

At UConn and I don't know who will listen, you know, and that's that's the point where we still have to make sure our voices are heard and see what we can do to make sure things are in a better place.

Because this just doesn't feel right.

PB **Pollard, Bryan** 1:03:59

Well, Trustee Dennis Levine, thank you for your comments. I mean, I couldn't agree more. I mean this is it is very upsetting to see these changes and just realize how what the impact is going to be on students and families.

It's really going to limit the ability for people to advance and get the educations that they want. So it's distressing but I would are there any other comments or questions from anyone on the call?

 **Peters, Suzanne** 1:04:17

OK.

SC **Shari Cantor** 1:04:36

Similarly, I know I really do appreciate the summary and especially when you're not getting the guidance that you need, it's very hard to guide us in letting us know what the impact is going to be. So there's a lot more to follow, but you know, in addition to the neurodiverse students.

 **Peters, Suzanne** 1:04:44

Absolutely.

You.

SC **Shari Cantor** 1:04:55

The part-time students, the students that choose art as a career path or, you know,

might not be hitting those kind of salary levels in the first few years. So it's the impact. Again, we might not feel the impact for a while, but there will be.

 **Peters, Suzanne** 1:05:05

Yes.

Mhm.

Mhm.

Mhm.

 **SC Shari Cantor** 1:05:15

a severe impact, no question. So it is very concerning.

 **Peters, Suzanne** 1:05:17

You.

 **PB Pollard, Bryan** 1:05:20

And so.

OK. Well, thank you, Mona and Suzanne, for a really informative presentation. And you know, we'll we'll see how it goes. I mean, it's distressing, but we'll just have to keep plugging away. But thank you very much.

OK, our I've gotten a note from our University Senate Rep that she had to leave, but she didn't have any any report to share. So but we thank her for being in in the meeting for the beginning part.

OK. Um, any other business?

OK, there's no need for executive session, so I will entertain a motion for adjournment.

 **SC Shari Cantor** 1:06:11

So move, canter.

 **DW Diane Whitney** 1:06:13

2nd Whitney.

 **PB Pollard, Bryan** 1:06:13

Move a second.

 **Andrea** 1:06:14
Second, second.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 1:06:16
All in favor.

 **Andrea** 1:06:19
I.

 **Shari Cantor** 1:06:19
I.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 1:06:19
All opposed. Any opposed?

 **Diane Whitney** 1:06:20
Hi.

 **Pollard, Bryan** 1:06:23
Any abstentions? OK, all right. So the motion passes. Our next Student Life Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 23rd at 4:00 PM. And thank you everyone for a really great meeting. I really learned a lot personally this Meeting and I think others did as well. So please enjoy the rest of your your day and we'll see each other soon. Thank you.

 **Dunn, Sean** 1:06:53
Thank you.

 **Fuerst, Nathan** 1:06:54
Thanks all.

 **Board of Trustees** stopped transcription