

AGENDA

University of Connecticut Board of Trustees

Student Life Committee Thursday, April 23, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. Virtual Meeting

Public Streaming Link (with live captioning, upon request): <https://techsupport.uconn.edu/bot>

(A recording of the meeting will be posted on the Board website, <https://boardoftrustees.uconn.edu/>, within seven days of the meeting.)

Call to order at **4:00 p.m.**

1) Public Participation*

*Individuals who wish to speak during the Public Participation portion of the Thursday, April 23, meeting, must sign up 24 hours in advance of the meeting's start time (i.e., 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22) by emailing BoardCommittees@uconn.edu. Speaking requests must include a name, telephone number, topic, and affiliation with the University (i.e., student, employee, member of the public). The Committee may limit the entirety of public comment to a maximum of 30 minutes. As an alternative, individuals may submit written comments to the Committee via email (BoardCommittees@uconn.edu), and all comments will be transmitted to the Committee.

2) Minutes from the February 19, 2026, Meeting (Attachment 1)

3) Standing Updates:

- Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment
- Student Trustees

4) Campus Climate Update

Fany DeJesús Hannon, Ed.D., Dean of Students

5) Sense of Belonging and Student Outcomes

Liza Boritz, Director of Planning, Assessment, and Evaluation

6) University Senate Representative Report

7) Other Business

8) Executive Session (as needed)

9) Adjournment

PLEASE NOTE: *If you are an individual with a disability and require accommodations, please e-mail the Board of Trustees Office at boardoftrustees@uconn.edu prior to the meeting.*

ATTACHMENT 1

DRAFT MINUTES

University of Connecticut Board of Trustees

Student Life Committee February 19, 2026 Virtual Meeting

Committee Trustees: Bryan Pollard, Shari Cantor, Andrea Dennis-LaVigne, Sean Dunn, Fabio Saccomanno, Diane Whitney

University Senate Representative: Tina McCarthy

University Staff: Radenka Maric, Nathan Fuerst, Nicole Gelston, James Lowe, Mona Lucas, Suzanne Peters, Shannon Walsh

Vice-Chair Pollard called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

1. Public Participation

Undergraduate student Mia Giancola spoke in support of a proposal to establish a Disability Cultural Center on campus.

2. Minutes from the November 13, 2025, Meeting

On a motion by Trustee Whitney, seconded by Trustee Dunn, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2025, Meeting.

3. Standing Updates:

- Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment
- Student Trustees

Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment Fuerst shared that the annual Campus Memorial Service, honoring students who have passed during the academic year, will be held on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, on the Storrs campus. The update also emphasized the University's continued commitment to student wellbeing as a JED Campus and designated Health Promoting University, including ongoing cross-campus efforts to assess campus environments, strengthen prevention strategies, and enhance coordinated support systems for students. Additionally, the University is nearing the release of admissions and financial aid decisions for the fall entering class, with decisions for both the Storrs and regional campuses expected in the coming weeks.

Undergraduate Student Trustee Dunn shared updates on housing planning for 2026–2027 and noted the recent UConn Alert System test as a reminder of the importance of emergency preparedness and clear communication. The report also referenced ongoing academic and campus climate initiatives and highlighted strong student engagement across campuses, including continued participation in innovation and research opportunities.

Graduate Student Trustee Saccomanno shared recent highlights and accomplishments from the UConn School of Law, the UConn School of Medicine, and the UConn School of Pharmacy.

4. Career Readiness and Life Skills Update:
James R. Lowe, Associate Vice President, Student Life and Enrollment

Associate Vice President Lowe presented key highlights from the Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills, emphasizing the Career Everywhere initiative and the University's comprehensive approach to integrating career readiness across the student experience. This topic will be raised with the full Board of Trustees for discussion at the next meeting.

5. Financial Aid Implications of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act: Mona Lucas, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment
Suzanne Peters, Director, Student Financial Aid Services

Assistant Vice President Lucas and Director Peters presented an overview of the financial aid implications of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, outlining upcoming changes to federal Pell Grants, loan programs, and new institutional accountability measures effective July 1, 2026.

6. University Senate Representative Report

There was no University Senate Representative Report.

7. Other Business

There was no Other Business.

8. Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Trustee Cantor, seconded by Trustee Dennis-LaVigne, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brianna Zecchini
Secretary to the Committee

UConn

Liza Boritz, PhD

Director of Planning, Assessment, and
Evaluation

Sense of Belonging and Student Outcomes

Student Life Committee

April 23, 2026



Liza Boritz, PhD

- **Director of Planning, Assessment, and Evaluation: SLE**
 - Increase understanding of the impact and influence of our policies, systems, and practices on the student experience.
- **Education:** I'm a double Husky! (Undergrad and PhD)
 - Ed.M from Harvard Graduate School of Education
- **Experience:** 25 years in teaching (preK-16+), educational policy, health promotion, and community development.
- **Research:** Understanding the non-academic factors that influence college student success.
- **Philosophy:** Using evidence to make practical, real change!

Key Takeaway:

Students' level of ***belongingness*** is as important -or more important, in some cases- as cognitive skills and knowledge in determining academic outcomes.

Belongingness Defined:

Belongingness is defined by two interrelated, complex concepts:

Sense of Value (Mattering):

The perception that one is considered important and that their contributions are appreciated within the community.

Sense of Belonging:

The feeling of being accepted, included, and connected to the community.

“Belonging” is feeling like you fit in, while “value” is feeling like you matter.

National Outcomes:

Graduation Rates:

Students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to graduate college on time (Bentrim & Henning, 2023; Patterson, & ButlerBarnes, 2015).

Achievement Gaps:

Increasing students' sense of belonging and value has been shown to reduce achievement gaps among historically marginalized, underserved student groups (Wolf & Perkins, 2017).

Strong Predictive Power:

Increasing sense of belonging has an equivalent impact on persistence and graduation as thousands of dollars in additional financial aid (Gopalan & Brady, 2020).

Mechanisms of Action:

Increases Academic Motivation

Higher levels of belongingness correlate to higher levels of academic commitment, enjoyment of studies, and academic engagement.

Fosters Resilience

Belongingness acts as a protective buffer significantly increasing resilience by supporting emotional stability, social validation, and a safety net during challenges or crises.

Enhances Resource Access

Students with a stronger sense of belonging are more likely to know of and access resources to support their success.

SERU Data Integration Project:

In Spring 2025, SLE launched a project combining data from multiple sources to create a unified, equity-aware view of the student journey.

Data incorporated as of Spring 2026:

- Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey results
- First Destination survey results
- Housing information
- Card swipes at UConn Rec and Dining
- Academic data (GPA, academic progress, cancellation/withdrawals)

Project Dashboard:

2024 SERU STUDENT HOUSING



Honors Students Overall Satisfaction **Sense of Belonging** Campus Climate Academic Experience Educational Debt

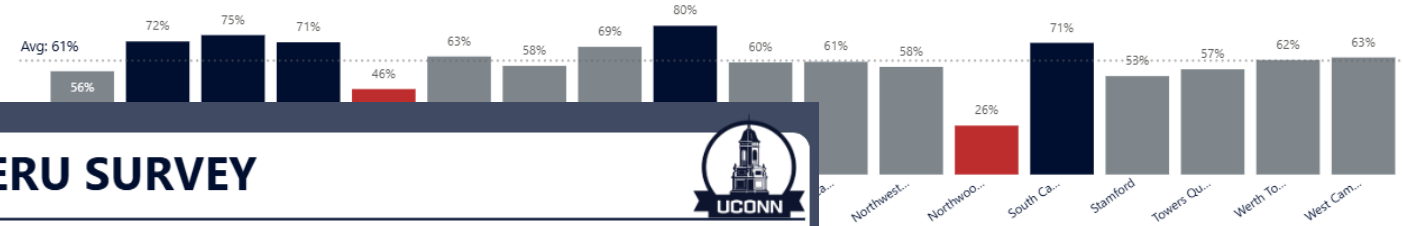
No Yes

Sense of Belonging

Sense of Value

Would Still Enroll UConn

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I feel that I belong at UConn



11%
of Students living On-Campus participated in SERU



2024 SERU SURVEY



What is SERU?

Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) is a survey allowing both undergraduate and graduate students to share their experiences, engagement, and overall satisfaction with UConn.

This report is designed to help users explore and understand key aspects of the student experience, including belonging, satisfaction, academic performance, and overall academic experience. The report is organized into several tabs, each focused on a specific area. Satisfaction scores provide insight into students' perceptions of both academic and social experiences, while demographic breakdowns allow users to examine trends across different student groups.

For the following statements, please indicate whether the statement was never true, sometimes true, or often true for you during the current academic year

Question	Often true	Sometimes true	Never true	Not Reported
I was unable to pay all of the costs of my housing on time.	111	240	1539	433
I worried I would not have enough money to cover the cost of my housing.	297	534	1067	425
Total	318	627	1560	435

2,323
STUDENTS

23,008 undergraduate students were invited to take the SERU Survey between March 25, 2024 - May 19, 2024. 2,323 students participated in the survey, for an overall response rate of 10.1%

CAMPUS PARTICIPATION

Across all campuses, **Storrs** drives the largest volume of participation with **1,866 respondents out of 18,750 students (10% response rate)**, reflecting its dominant share of overall engagement ¹. Smaller campuses show notably higher proportional engagement: **Waterbury** has the **highest response rate at 14% (93 of 677)**, and **Avery Point** follows with **13% (54 of 422)**, indicating stronger relative participation despite smaller populations ¹. **Stamford** and **Hartford** have moderate response rates of **10% (204 of 1,943)** and **9% (106 of 1,230)** respectively, suggesting potential opportunities to

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Summary	Overall Satisfaction	Belonging	Campus Climate
Academic Experience	Housing	Rec Center	Student Orgs
Separations	Career Center Outcomes	Score Correlations	

SERU Expanded:

- **The Student Experience in the Research University Consortium:**

- Based at UC Berkeley's Center for Studies in Higher Education (CSHE).
- A member-run, not-for-profit, research consortium of Research 1 institutions.

- **The Student Experience in the Research University Survey:**

- An online survey of the student experience within major research-intensive universities.
- Implemented by Institutional Research annually (undergraduates in even years, graduate students in odd years).

www.seru.edu

SERU Core Survey Modules ↻



Overall Satisfaction



Academic Engagement



Educational Experience



U Climate for Diversity



Evaluation of Major



Academic & Personal Development



Student Wellbeing



Plans & Aspirations



Cost of Attendance



Demographics

UConn Data:

Sense of belonging and value consistently demonstrate a strong connection to student outcomes.

- Undergraduates who reported a strong sense of belonging while enrolled were 55% more likely to have a “favorable outcome” after graduation.
- 42% of undergraduates who **transferred** out of UConn reported doing so –at least in part- due to low sense of belonging and community fit (22% cited financial reasons).
- When asked if they would still choose to enroll at UConn again if given the chance, sense of belonging (0.70) and value (0.61) were the two strongest correlates among undergraduates.
 - Academic Satisfaction (0.56), Social Satisfaction (0.47), Overall Climate for DEI (0.45)
- Sense of belonging and value (0.54) are the two strongest correlates to academic satisfaction among undergraduates.
 - Quality of Instruction (0.49), Social Satisfaction (0.48), UConn is Welcoming (0.45)

Implications for Student Life and Enrollment

Through the SERU Data Integration Project, we are exploring the experiences and touchpoints that influence belonging and using that information to inform planning.

Factor	Relationship to Belonging
Good Physical Health: Grads	+70%
On-Campus Employment: Campus Changers	+60%
Living on Campus: First Year Undergrads	+30%
UConn Recreation: Undergrads Averaging 3 visits/week	+22%
Student Organization Participation: Undergrads	+21%
Experiential Learning: Undergrads	+20%

Measuring Belonging in Other Contexts:

Classroom Experiences:

- Studied with a group of classmates outside of class
- Opportunities for active participation in classes
- Having an instructor who increases your enthusiasm for the subject

Interactions with Faculty:

- Faculty being open to discuss student needs, concerns, and suggestions
- Access to faculty outside of class
- Faculty maintaining respectful interactions in class

Co/Extra-curricular Engagement:

- Participation in research, creative, or field experience
- Internship, practicum, or field experience
- Academic service-learning or community-based experience

Available Tools:

Using SERU to Understand Student Engagement:

A Guide for Faculty and Staff in Academic Programs

UConn

STUDENT LIFE AND ENROLLMENT

Student Engagement

Student engagement is defined as the level of interest, involvement, and active participation students demonstrate in their academic *and* extracurricular activities. It encompasses how invested students are in their learning processes, the quality of their interactions (with staff, faculty, and peers), and engagement with the broader campus community. Student engagement has long been used as a key predictor of student success outcomes such as GPA, time to degree, retention, and graduation rates.

Our understanding of student engagement has evolved in recent years. Previously, the core of student engagement focused primarily on behavioral metrics. While this is still a key predictor of student success, the concept of engagement has expanded to include metrics around emotional and cognitive engagement.

Behavioral Engagement

Students' participation through actions like attending class, completing assignments, internships & co-curricular involvement, and participating in student activities.

Emotional Engagement

Students' feelings of belonging and positive or negative reactions to their school, teachers, and peers.

Cognitive Engagement

The level of psychological investment students demonstrate in learning, including their effort, focus, and use of deep learning strategies.

Using SERU

The Undergraduate SERU can assist faculty and staff from academic programs better understand these areas of student engagement among their students. The chart "Using SERU to Assess Student Engagement" can support that process.

If you would like support in using this guide or accessing and interpreting the SERU data, please reach out to Liza Boritz, Director of Planning, Assessment, and Evaluation at: liza.boritz@UConn.edu

Using SERU to Assess Student Engagement



Indicators of Student Engagement: Behavioral Engagement	
During this academic year, how often have you done each of the following?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed to a class discussion Made a class presentation Substantially revised a paper before submitting it to be graded Sought academic help from an instructor or tutor when needed Studied with a group of classmates outside of class
On average, how much of your assigned course reading have you completed this academic year?	
Indicate the following scholarship, research, and creative activities that you are currently doing as a UConn student.	<input type="checkbox"/> A research project or research paper as part of your coursework

Indicators of Student Engagement: Cognitive Engagement

During this academic year, how often have you done each of the following?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found required Concentrated Increased Effort
Which of the following activities, experiences, or programs are you currently doing or have completed as a UConn student:	<input type="checkbox"/> Credit <input type="checkbox"/> Non-credit <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial <input type="checkbox"/> Study Council <input type="checkbox"/> None
Indicate the following scholarship, research, and creative activities that you are currently doing or have completed as a UConn student.	<input type="checkbox"/> Assist <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct <input type="checkbox"/> Under <input type="checkbox"/> With <input type="checkbox"/> None

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your educational experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to small classes (fewer than 20 students) Quality of academic advising Access to academic advising Access to faculty outside of class Communication between students and the department Opportunities for research experience or to produce creative products Educational enrichment programs (e.g., service-learning, study abroad, internships)
Indicate the following scholarship, research, and creative activities that you are currently doing or have completed as a UConn student.	<input type="checkbox"/> Assist faculty in conducting research <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct your own research project outside of your regular coursework under the guidance or supervision of a faculty member <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct your own research project outside of your regular coursework without the guidance or supervision of a faculty member <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct your own creative project outside of your regular coursework under the guidance or supervision of a faculty member <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct your own creative project outside of your regular coursework without the guidance or supervision of a faculty member
During this academic year, how often have you done each of the following?	<input type="checkbox"/> Had a class in which the professor knew or learned your name
How often have you experienced the following?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty being open to discuss student needs, concerns, and suggestions Students treated fairly by the faculty (based on grading and exam policies) Faculty providing useful feedback on student work Faculty maintaining respectful interactions in classes
During this academic year, how often have you done each of the following?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped a classmate better understand the course material when studying together
Which of the following activities, experiences, or programs are you currently doing or have completed as a UConn student:	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership program <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial program
How many professors do you know well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation in support of an application for a job or for graduate or professional school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zero 1 2 3 4 or more

Key Takeaway, Revisited:

Students' level of ***belongingness*** is as important -or more important, in some cases- as cognitive skills and knowledge in determining academic outcomes.

Continuing the Momentum:

New SERU Questions in 2026

Introduced enhanced SERU questions to more precisely measure students' sense of belonging and value across key stages of the undergraduate experience and link those measures to success outcomes.

Expansion of SERU Data Integration Project

Expand the SERU Data Integration Project to connect and **share** belonging indicators with retention, academic progress, and engagement data to better inform institutional decision-making.

Work Across Divisions to Institutionalize Belonging

Working across academic and administrative divisions to embed belonging metrics into ongoing planning, assessment, and accountability structures as a core driver of student success and the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.

Works Cited/Reading List

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Questions?

Liza Boritz, PhD

Director of Planning, Assessment, and Evaluation
Student Life and Enrollment

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University Senate Representative Report

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Prepared by Senate Representative Tina McCarthy

[Fresh Check Day](#) is a signature mental health promotion and suicide prevention initiative designed to engage students through an interactive and supportive campus experience. The event features a variety of expo-style booths, peer-to-peer engagement, and participation from multiple campus departments and student organizations. Attendees are provided with resources related to mental health and well-being, along with free food, entertainment, and promotional giveaways to encourage participation and foster a welcoming environment.

The Storrs campus will host [Fresh Check Day 2026](#) on **Saturday, April 25, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM on the Student Union Lawn**. This event aims to promote awareness, reduce stigma surrounding mental health, and connect students with campus resources through interactive programming and community engagement.

Fresh Check Day events have also been successfully held across UConn's regional campuses this semester:

- **Waterbury:** March 31, 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM
- **Stamford:** April 7, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
- **Avery Point:** April 9, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- **Hartford:** April 16, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

These events collectively demonstrate the University's ongoing commitment to student mental health and well-being across all campuses.