

UConnPIRG Core Meeting Minutes 18-09  
Monday October 9, 2017, 7 PM  
SU 325

Voting Members: Emily O'Hara (Secretary), Walter Dodson (Vice Chair), Alex Pawlak (Treasurer), Antonio Cajigas, Vincent Cajigas, Ian Beattie, Kharl Reynado, Justin Kaiser, Noah O'Connor, Sam Donahue, Michael Katz, Kyleigh Hillerud, Matthew Talley, Chad Schroeder, Matthew Byanyima, Aaron Golab, Alex Ercolani, Faizaan Siddiqui, Colin Bixler, Vasilika Papas, Dylan DeMoura, Trinity Torgerson, Brandon Chesnut, Xiaorong Jiang, Yunhui Zhang, Kuangyou Chen

Non-voting Members: N/A

Guests: Arielle Mizrahi (Campus Organizer), Sasha Richardson (Advisor)

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM by Vice Chair Walter Dodson

- I. Introductions
- II. One UConn Update
  - a. Last week, all campaign work was suspended for one week so that UConnPIRG could help work to save UConn's budget that was proposed in the CGA. The budget was vetoed, and a veto vote was not taken up. However, the new budget is now being debated.
    - i. 128 students called their elected officials at our tables
    - ii. 838 conversations were had about the budget with students
    - iii. 2635 students heard the message in class announcements
      1. 20% of the undergraduate student body
  - b. Other student groups will now be taking up more of the work, and we will be stepping back
    - i. Found widespread support from professors and students
- III. Campaign Updates
  - a. Democracy—Matt Byanyima
    - i. Table on this past Friday (coordinated by Noah O'Connor). Spoke to students about the details of democracy this semester. Gathered signatures for a petition to support ranked choice voting. This week will focus on coalition building with other campus groups. Hoping to meet with groups, as well as USG President Irma Valverde to reform elections on campus and in the community
  - b. Styrofoam—Justin Kaiser
    - i. For the next two weeks: Table this Wednesday from 5-8 PM at Northwest Dining Hall coordinated by Aaron Golab.
      1. Two weeks: Call-In Week
        - a. Have students call in to Dunkin Donuts using a rap. Hoping to get between 75 and 100 calls made
  - c. Textbooks—Kharl Reynado
    - i. This week: National Week of Action with other Student PIRGs asking professors to get engaged with the campaign and learn more about access codes. Access codes hinder a student's ability to affordably buy their textbook, as a student cannot get a good grade in a class without an access code. Asking professors to sign on to a non-binding endorsement to consider college affordability when choosing the assigned reading for

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classes. Also asking professors to reconsider using access codes in the future. Goal for the week: 50 professors.

1. Core members are asked to visit 3 professors and ask them to sign on
  - a. Teaching Assistants can sign it as well
  - b. Please complete by the end of the week
- ii. Vasilika Papas: A survey done on students and professors in classes using Open Education Resources (OER) is being published in a report just before Thanksgiving Break
- d. Save the Bees—Emily O’Hara
  - i. Visited Julia Cartabiano Spring Valley Student Farms on Friday with Service-Learning Coordinator Sam Donahue
    1. Looking at the potential to fundraise or purchase shrubs that are bee friendly
    2. Will be having an interest table on Wednesday on Fairfield Way 11-2 PM to gather names and numbers of interest parties
  - ii. Sending students to restaurants to
  - iii. Panel discussion
- e. 100% Renewable Energy—Walter Dodson
  - i. November 8 at 7 PM: Film screening in CHEM A203. Hopefully getting into Oak 101 or another more central classroom.
  - ii. Tables: A table at South Dining Hall from 11-2 PM on Thursday, and one from 4-7 PM on Wednesday at Towers
    1. Petition goal: 2,000
    2. Present amount: 1,100. 7 weeks to hit the goal
  - iii. Matt Byanyima: What are administrator’s thoughts on the campaign?
    1. Walter Dodson: In the spring, administration outreach will begin. Right now, the focus is on student support. Looking for a statement of support from USG.
  - iv. Chad Schroeder: Rally
    1. At the retreat, students decided they wanted to organize a rally in Hartford in the first/second week of February to fight for renewable energy in the state, specifically at colleges in the state. This week is a planning week; everyone gets 5 colleges to research in terms of sustainability efforts, with 8 towns to research
- f. Hunger and Homelessness—Casey Saxton
  - i. Casey was not present for this meeting

IV. Business

- a. Walter Dodson—Film Screening
  - i. Two departments have cosponsored the 100% Renewable Film Screening of *An Inconvenient Sequel*. At this time, it is unknown whether or not the departments can financially support the film screening. The total package for the film is \$725 for screening rights. Seeking an allotment of \$1,000 from the 100% Renewable Campaign Budget.
  - ii. Walter Dodson recuses himself from the vote

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- iii. Alex Pawlak motions for an allotment of \$1,000 for the screening rights of *An Inconvenient Sequel* should the two departments helping to cosponsor the event be unable to pay for the rights.
  - 1. Kharl Reynado seconds the motion
  - 2. Matt Byanyima abstains
  - 3. With the exception of Matt Byanyima's abstention, the vote for \$1,000 allotment passes unanimously

V. The Tripod

- a. Campus Relations, Visibility, and Leadership Development
- b. What, how, why of the organization
- c. Discussion
  - i. What, how, why PIRG does the work it does?
    - 1. Justin Kaiser: We fight for the interests of the public, as opposed to the private. Specifically, we fight for the interests of the students on this campus. At the end of the day, we are their voice, and we give them the support to fight for the things they believe in. We table, we generate interest, we utilize the tripod. We give students tools to use in the future.
    - 2. Dylan: We're an activist group facing environmental, social, economic sustainability. We're activists.
    - 3. Faizaan: My friends think PIRG "is neat-o." I think of PIRG, and the way I explain it to other people is that there are issues that we as a society face, and a lot of the time it is easier to look the other way. PIRG is the people that take on those issues, fight for them, and they do what needs to be done. It's a way for us to show that students care about the campus and want to make a difference
    - 4. Matt Byanyima: I've always described PIRG as an organization rich in civic values. We don't rely on anyone to do organizing for us. We understand that though we are not politicians, we have an active role in improving the environment and improving democracy. It's about civic action, and understanding that being a citizen means having responsibilities. This organization helps you develop responsibilities.
    - 5. Sam Donahue: I usually focus on the issues we fight for. When people hear about issues like [Save the Bees] they understand, and when I expand on it, they get a good general, positive sense of what we do.
    - 6. Kharl Reynado: Whenever I tell people what we do, they tell me that they couldn't do that work. We are the people that are making the change, and I think that's powerful, something to always remember when we're feeling run down. I'm fighting for our future. Keeping it up as we're fighting for people and the rights of our peers is really the why.

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Meeting adjourned at 7:57 by Vice Chair Walter Dodson

Minutes submitted by Emily O'Hara