

UConnPIRG Core Meeting 20-14  
Monday December 2nd, 2019, 7 PM  
SU 310

Voting Members: Emily O'Hara (Chair), Jessica Gagnon (Vice Chair), Samuel Donahue (Treasurer), Michael Katz (Secretary), Ben Albee, Shafina Chowdhury, Brian Garzon, Brianna Barbeau, Audrey Soltis, Angelina Vaccarelli, Colleen Keller, Natalie Seier, Cheyenne Tavares, Victor Htut, Rachel Cormier, Kyleigh Hillerud, Erin McConnell, Elizabeth Turano, Dylan DeMoura, Maya Murarka, Mary Monticello

Guests: Petra Favorite (UConnPIRG campus organizer), Kurt Daigle (UConnPIRG primary advisor)

- I. Meeting brought to order at 7:02pm by Emily O'Hara (Chair)
- II. Introductions
- III. Chapter Updates
  - A. Spring 2020 Recruitment Drive/Baby Kickoff
    1. Colleen Keller announces that she will coordinate UConnPIRG's Spring 2020 recruitment drive, which will be a critical opportunity to recruit new members and train them for success. She acknowledges that the semester's first two-and-a-half weeks can already be stressful, but asks that those able to contribute to the recruitment drive and help incoming volunteers transition into the organization do so. She had considered the idea of a "baby kickoff" internally before Natalie Seier proposed it officially, as many of this semester's new volunteers - who merely wanted to learn more about the organization - were immediately thrust into recruitment tactics and tasked with representing the organization. Next semester, the first week of volunteering on the recruitment drive will involve returning members exclusively, and the first Sunday will be devoted to providing incoming members with an organizational overview and tactical trainings. Keller notes her desire to rename the "baby kickoff" to sound more professional. She is working to make the recruitment drive more organized and streamlined overall, and will email its tactical coordinators this week.
    2. O'Hara (Chair) announces that Michael Katz (Secretary) will distribute a chapterwide email tonight containing a QR code for those interested in recruitment drive leadership roles.
  - B. Ex Officio Senator/Hunger & Homelessness
    1. Keller notes that another USG Senate meeting will take place this week, listing several statements of position and pieces of legislation that will be up for a vote. She commends Hunger & Homelessness's successful awareness week, and credits Dylan DeMoura for referring her to a website outlining food insecurity by state and county.
  - C. Other Spring 2020 Updates
    1. O'Hara (Chair) clarifies that next semester's executive cabinet will remain the same as this semester's, with the exception of incoming treasurer's

assistant Maya Murarka. She expresses gratitude to everyone who submitted letters of intent for the position and made the ultimate decision difficult. She asks Core where Fall 2020 and Spring 2021's kickoffs should be held.

- a) Jessica Gagnon (Vice Chair), Samuel Donahue (Treasurer), and Kyleigh Hillerud suggest ITE C80.
- b) O'Hara (Chair) offers to send a poll to the chapter on the matter, but she also supports ITE C80.
- c) Hillerud agrees with O'Hara (Chair) that ITE C80 would be favorable to the Student Union, which has its own benefits to consider. Donahue (Treasurer) believes that audience focus would be better in ITE C80.
- d) O'Hara (Chair) conducts an informal vote, with ITE C80 serving as Core's overwhelming preference.

#### D. Campaign Updates

##### 1. Affordable Textbooks

- a) Erin McConnell remarks upon the campaign's successful faculty canvassing session and its final meeting of the semester tomorrow. She also notes that this will be her final semester as campaign coordinator, although she will remain involved within the organization.

##### 2. Zero Waste

- a) Hillerud initiates a discussion of November 19's "True Cost" film screening.
  - (1) Angelina Vaccarelli notes the technical difficulties with the audio, which lasted around twenty minutes and required the assistance of five Student Union employees to resolve. Because of this, the discussion period had to be placed prior to the film's screening, but said discussion remained engaging and productive. Otherwise, the event proved successful.
  - (2) DeMoura adds that turnout was reasonably strong, with 43 people in attendance throughout the course of the event, and that the film was great.
- b) Hillerud praises DeMoura for leading a great discussion at the film screening before she transitions into November 21's campaign meeting, which was the final one of the semester. She provided attendees with pizza and discussed plans for next semester, with a legislative lobby day and a Zero Waste festival as focal points.

##### 3. New Voters Project

- a) O'Hara (Chair) notes that the campaign also held its final meeting of the semester on November 21 to reflect upon this semester and plan for next semester. She and Victor Htut engaged in a national campaign phone call today.

- (1) Htut notes that they talked to national and statewide PIRG representatives about reaching out to faculty coalitions and drafting a statewide campaign plan with Trinity's chapter.
- b) O'Hara (Chair) notes that she was overcome with emotion during the final campaign meeting on account of her incredible volunteers.
- 4. 100% Renewable Energy
  - a) Ben Albee acknowledges the relative success of November 20's awareness event. Representatives from UConn's Office of Sustainability were in attendance and expressed their interest in collaborating with UConnPIRG next semester, having already conducted pertinent research.

*Core sings happy birthday to Katz (Secretary), who expresses gratitude afterward.*

#### IV. Semester Debrief

- A. O'Hara (Chair) initiates a discussion of the semester's positive and negative developments. She calls upon newer volunteers to contribute heavily to the conversation.
  - 1. Audrey Soltis praises the baby kickoff as a means of improving volunteer turnout and retention and providing a clearer perspective of the organization.
  - 2. Albee believes that UConnPIRG has a good public image, citing people who visit tables and express their love for PIRG. He also suggests that UConnPIRG's volunteers are not considered as bothersome as other PIRG chapters' volunteers are.
  - 3. Mary Monticello believes that many other students still perceive UConnPIRG negatively, citing some critical Reddit posts.
  - 4. Gagnon (Vice Chair) expresses a need to flaunt the organization's victories more outwardly and thus better inform skeptics.
  - 5. Htut suggests that the issue may stem from people not knowing about PIRG in general. He praises the abundance of leadership development opportunities, citing the fact that there will be five new campaign coordinators - many of whom are freshmen - next semester. However, he proposes that volunteers be trained across multiple campaigns so that they can organize and partake in events beyond those pertaining to their given campaign.
  - 6. O'Hara (Chair) suggests that the organization could be more diverse and inclusive, expressing a desire to build bonds within the chapter and make the organization more accessible to outsiders.
  - 7. DeMoura lauds this semester's unified executive board and cabinet, alongside all the promising new recruits. He concurs with O'Hara (Chair) in that the organization must become more intersectional.
  - 8. Seier praises the organization's cohesiveness and branding, much of which can be attributed to Hillerud. She agrees that the organization could be

more diverse and inclusive, adding that it could be more collaborative with other organizations as opposed to merely supporting them.

9. Rachel Cormier notes that she received an email from Kim Miller, who provided suggestions for UConnPIRG to spend down its surplus. One especially intriguing idea involves bringing an influential speaker to campus next semester. Cormier calls upon Core to provide suggestions for this initiative.
10. Seier recounts her discussions with Hillerud about UConnPIRG positioning itself as a source of education in addition to taking direct action.
11. Shafina Chowdhury asks if UConnPIRG has a website, to which O'Hara (Chair) replies that it has two: one owned by ConnPIRG (<https://connpirgstudents.org/chapters/uconn-storrs/>) and another owned by UConn (<https://pirg.uconn.edu/>). Chowdhury suggests that the websites be better publicized. O'Hara (Chair) agrees while noting that Hillerud will update UConn's PIRG website soon.

## V. Business

### A. Approval of 11/18/19 Minutes

1. Katz (Secretary) proposes a substitution of "Julia Ward" with "Amanda Cicchetti" within the "100% Renewable Energy" subsection of the "Campaign Updates" section, having misidentified the speaker at that point of the meeting.
2. O'Hara (Chair) motions to approve the amendment to the minutes.
3. Donahue (Treasurer) seconds.
4. Motion passes unanimously (*Monticello and Keller abstain*).
5. O'Hara (Chair) motions to approve the amended minutes.
6. McConnell seconds.
7. Motion passes unanimously (*O'Hara (Chair) and Keller abstain*).

### B. Spring 2020 Purchase Orders

1. Donahue (Treasurer) distributes physical copies of the proposed Spring 2020 purchase orders and displays a spreadsheet on the projector. He explains that UConnPIRG must compensate ConnPIRG financially for the services and goods it provides throughout the semester. He outlines each category and details some specific line items within the spreadsheet. The projected expenses, totaling \$48,085, are as follows:
  - a) \$15,375 for general meetings and trainings,
  - b) \$7,525 for New Voters Project,
  - c) \$7,575 for Zero Waste,
  - d) \$5,550 for 100% Renewable Energy,
  - e) \$5,695 for Hunger & Homelessness, and
  - f) \$6,385 for Affordable Textbooks.
2. O'Hara (Chair) clarifies that these projected expenses are based upon each campaign's plans for next semester, which explains the disparate valuations of each campaign.

3. Donahue (Treasurer) notes that he must maintain one physical copy of the purchase orders for scanning purposes, but that Core can keep all other copies.
4. Donahue (Treasurer) motions to approve UConnPIRG's Spring 2020 purchase orders.
5. Htut seconds.
6. Motion passes unanimously.

VI. Announcements

- A. DeMoura jubilantly announces that Kacey Musgraves has retweeted him, with his tweet consequently going viral. Core momentarily examines the tweet in question.
- B. O'Hara (Chair) bids a fond farewell to Donahue (Treasurer), who is graduating at semester's end. She displays an array of commemorative photos on the projector, after which Core applauds. She thanks Donahue (Treasurer) for his service and unprecedented dedication to the treasurer's position, eliciting another round of applause from Core. She expresses excitement for Cormier as Spring 2020's incoming chapter treasurer, especially given her extensive training under Donahue (Treasurer).
- C. O'Hara (Chair) announces the kickstart of a UConnPIRG book club over winter break, displaying a QR code on the projector for those interested in joining. Gagnon (Vice Chair) has already suggested a few books, but others are welcome to add to this list.
- D. O'Hara (Chair) initiates the Secret Snowflake holiday gift exchange.
- E. O'Hara (Chair) thanks everyone for their hard work this semester, imploring them to finish strong and have a pleasant winter break.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm

Minutes submitted by Michael Katz (Secretary)