

UConnPIRG Core Meeting 20-25
Monday March 30th, 2020, 7 PM
WebEx (remote location due to COVID-19 outbreak)

Voting Members: Emily O'Hara (Chair), Jessica Gagnon (Vice Chair), Maya Murarka (Treasurer), Michael Katz (Secretary), Julia Ward, Dylan DeMoura, Natalie Seier, Erin McConnell, Kyleigh Hillerud, Kyle Cyr, Rebecca Tripp, Angelina Vaccarelli, Chuck O'Coin, Simon Hua, Chad Schroeder, Cheyenne Tavares, Mary Elizabeth Monticello, Victor Htut, Shafina Chowdhury, Andre Johnson, Venkata Patchigolla, Leah LePage, Ben Albee, Abigail Coia, Joseph Drossman, David Vallejo, Elizabeth Turano, Colleen Keller, Jeremiah Walker, Hannah Schneider, Marisa Doyle, Julia Stage, Irene Soteriou, Max Starke, Aleksandra Driscoll

Guests: Kurt Daigle (UConnPIRG primary advisor), Justin Landry (ConnPIRG campus organizer for Trinity College)

- I. Meeting brought to order at 7:02pm by Emily O'Hara (Chair)
- II. Introductions
- III. Campaign/Executive Board Updates
 - A. Colleen Keller says Hunger and Homelessness has sent out its community needs assessment and is working on a website. She met with UCAFE last Friday and will do so again this Friday. The campaign is designing social media graphics and working with a national team.
 - B. Victor Htut says the New Voters Project has been given more time to consider registration and educational efforts with Connecticut's presidential primary being delayed to June 2. The campaign is planning the release of its voter toolkit and social media graphics, and has been looking toward the fall semester and beyond.
 - C. Dylan DeMoura says WashPIRG contributed to the state's passage of a single-use plastic bag ban, while other states (including CT) have suspended their bans in light of the pandemic and plastics companies' exploitation of the situation. Letters-to-the-editor (LTEs) and video petitions will be Zero Waste's primary initiatives this semester. Next semester the campaign aims to end UConn's Coca-Cola contract and educate people around zero waste.
 - D. Shafina Chowdhury says Affordable Textbooks plans to create a booklet, send a subject-specific survey to students, and create a faculty petition.
 - E. Ben Albee praises his interns, who ran a productive 100% Renewable Energy campaign meeting while he experienced technical difficulties. The campaign is planning for its 100th Day of Action week.
 - F. O'Hara (Chair) praises the conversations around one-, three-, and five-year plans from last Friday's planning meeting. Planning meetings will continue to take place on Fridays at 4 p.m.
 - G. Maya Murarka (Treasurer) implores Core to submit reimbursement requests to her.
 - H. Kyleigh Hillerud comments on the success of PIRG's national coronavirus response campaigns. She notes O'Hara (Chair)'s outreach to UConn's other Tier III organizations. This week's national theme revolves around building a

movement for NVP in 2020, for which Hillerud will reach out to Core members after tonight's meeting to conduct a social media action.

IV. 2020-21 Executive Board Elections

A. Chair

1. Chad Schroeder nominates Keller, who accepts.
2. Hillerud nominates DeMoura, who accepts.
3. Keller expresses her desire to make the organization's plans and goals come to fruition and maintain a strong sense of leadership. She says her personal growth has allowed her to represent UConnPIRG on a massive scale, and she wants to follow in the footsteps of her role models and mentors within the organization. She cites her experience (particularly as a campaign coordinator), ideas, and commitment. She also wants to modernize the chapter by creating a shared drive for resources and supporting campaign coordinators in unprecedented ways.
4. DeMoura cites his versatility, having worked on four campaigns within three years, and his experience as retention manager and Zero Waste coordinator. He has organized tracking for the chapter and worked on the statewide campaign, which has involved a heavy focus on legislation and staff collaboration. He says he has developed as a leader and can push the chapter further into activism. His first campus relations meeting would be with USG, the HuskyVote coalition, and UConn president Thomas Katsouleas. He would also push to end UConn's Coca-Cola contract. He aims to make the organization more intersectional, support other student groups, and work with student laborers.
5. Schroeder asks each candidate how they would address the interconnected nature of UConnPIRG's issues to build on-campus coalitions.
 - a) Keller cites her H&H background and her role in UCAFE this year, having reached out to Tier III organizations and those specifically affected by food insecurity. She wishes to make coalition-building the priority for all campaigns.
 - b) DeMoura says he would work on campaign initiatives with other student groups. He claims NVP might have the most potential in this regard next semester, but he would also organize against UConn's construction of a natural gas plant and work on a bottle bill that is being drafted by students. He would also collaborate with professors who conduct research on UConnPIRG's issues.
6. Jessica Gagnon (Vice Chair) asks each candidate what they would do differently from the incumbent chair.
 - a) Keller would modernize the chapter in a number of ways, which consist of the following: making shared drives for the chapter and its executive members, having students swipe their UConn IDs to sign into Core meetings, sharing a Google Calendar with all organizational meetings, creating campaign-specific emails, having the treasurer conduct biweekly meetings with campaign coordinators, and providing more national support.

- b) DeMoura would address the challenges of UConn's funding system by working with other Tier III organizations to put less stress on the treasurer and campaign coordinators. He would also push to compensate the national staff for all services rendered and help to spend down UConnPIRG's surplus.
- 7. O'Hara (Chair) asks each candidate how they would prevent themselves from becoming absent leaders, given that neither plans to continue being a campaign coordinator next year.
 - a) Keller would maintain her online office hours upon students' return to campus next semester. She would also attend each campaign meeting and reach out to coordinators for support, and would set an example for the chapter by maximizing her volunteer opportunities.
 - b) DeMoura would attend meetings and stay involved in the chapter as a whole, providing a welcoming presence for others and demonstrating his investment in a variety of campaign work.
- 8. Hillerud asks each candidate how they can be the chapter's ultimate motivator and present an inspiring vision.
 - a) Colleen cites her experience as recruitment drive coordinator each of the last two semesters. Although the chapter consistently fell short of its goals throughout the spring drive, she maintained hope and inspired members via one-on-one meetings. As chapter chair, she would continue to follow up with members and reevaluate their goals.
 - b) DeMoura cites his experience working on the legislative-focused Zero Waste campaign. Although constantly changing dynamics brought about some discouragement, DeMoura readjusted the campaign's strategy and came back strong. The success of UConnPIRG's virtual lobby day prior to spring break, which DeMoura attributed primarily to Gagnon (Vice Chair), is a testament to such resilience. DeMoura also characterizes himself as an extremely passionate person who likes to inspire people.
- 9. Schroeder asks each candidate to speak to their strong commitment to UConnPIRG, and to how that informs their leadership vision.
 - a) Keller invokes many members' shared motivation to join UConnPIRG for the issues and stay for the people. She was inspired by the organizational leadership during her first semester, and devised several ideas as a campaign coordinator during her second semester. She tends to stay committed to things that have the potential to improve, and she wants to bring the best out of everyone.
 - b) DeMoura believes that his voice is valued and respected within UConnPIRG, and such a welcoming environment has always motivated him to do the work. He thinks UConnPIRG should organize around hope because there is so much of it in the work

that the organization does, and there must be a heavy emphasis on national movements.

Keller and DeMoura exit WebEx at 7:57 p.m.

10. Core engages in closed discussion.

Keller and DeMoura return to WebEx at 8:20 p.m.

11. Core members submit an online ranked-choice voting form to Gagnon (Vice Chair), Michael Katz (Secretary), and Elizabeth Turano, who track the results.

12. Keller is elected as UConnPIRG's 2020-21 chapter chair.

B. Vice Chair

1. O'Hara (Chair) nominates DeMoura, who accepts.

2. Gagnon (Vice Chair) nominates Natalie Seier, who accepts.

3. DeMoura cites his co-coordination of activist class with Gagnon (Vice Chair), which has consistently drawn the largest attendance nationwide, and his ability to maintain almost all of this semester's interns on board. He recounts his invaluable experience as the statewide campaign coordinator. He claims to work well internally and hopes to make campaigns more intersectional, protect and organize around student labor, and support everyone in the organization.

4. Seier wants everyone to associate UConnPIRG with intentionality. She would spur intersectionality through inter-campaign work, create committees to open up more leadership roles, provide skills to members that would be applicable beyond their advocacy work, hold regular office hours, and work with faculty and the executive cabinet to prepare new members and help them balance their priorities. She credits current organizational leaders for inspiring these initiatives.

5. Gagnon (Vice Chair) asks each candidate what they would do differently than her.

a) DeMoura would organize around on-campus labor, for class is an intersectional issue that affects everyone. He would also work with UConn's Graduate Student Senate (GSS).

b) Seier would establish committees centered around legislation, intersectionality and inclusion, and public relations/communications in order to attract people who are more passionate about tactics than they are about campaigns. She would also work with UConnPIRG's incoming staff advisor in the fall, and help all members understand how to balance their priorities.

6. Schroeder asks each candidate how they would foster an environment of diversity and inclusion, distinguishing between chapterwide and campaign-level approaches.

a) DeMoura would collaborate more often with UConn's cultural centers and have UConnPIRG become a source of grassroots organizing and mobilization for everyone. He would also work around the intersectional issue of labor and incorporate it into current campaigns.

- b) Seier would examine other student groups and reach out to them to aid in effective chapter recruitment. She would also promote chapterwide discussions of collaboration with cultural centers and other diverse student groups, and address the issue via representation. Within each campaign she would have people who focus on intersectionality.
 - 7. O'Hara (Chair) motions by unanimous consent to move the vote on UConnPIRG's amended constitution and bylaws to April 6's Core meeting.
 - 8. Motion passes unanimously.
DeMoura and Seier exit WebEx at 8:42 p.m.
 - 9. Core engages in closed discussion.
DeMoura and Seier return to WebEx at 8:58 p.m.
 - 10. Core members submit an online ranked-choice voting form to Gagnon (Vice Chair), Katz (Secretary), and Turano, who track the results.
 - 11. DeMoura is elected as UConnPIRG's 2020-21 vice chair.
- C. Treasurer
- 1. O'Hara (Chair) nominates Murarka (Treasurer), who accepts.
 - 2. Murarka (Treasurer) cites her extensive organizational experience and strong economics background. Since taking on the role toward the beginning of this semester, she has adjusted well and served UConnPIRG and UConn students to her fullest capacity. She wants to simplify the purchase request system with campaign coordinators, maintain strong and healthy relationships with the business office, spend down UConnPIRG's surplus, and support other student activists.
 - 3. O'Hara (Chair) motions by unanimous consent to reelect Murarka (Treasurer) for 2020-21.
 - 4. Motion passes unanimously, and Murarka (Treasurer) is reelected as UConnPIRG's 2020-21 treasurer.
- D. Secretary
- 1. Katz (Secretary) nominates Albee, who accepts.
 - 2. Murarka (Treasurer) nominates Seier, who declines.
 - 3. Schroeder nominates Julia Ward, who accepts.
 - 4. Gagnon (Vice Chair) nominates Mary Elizabeth Monticello, who accepts.
 - 5. DeMoura nominates Kyle Cyr, who accepts.
 - 6. Katz (Secretary) nominates Leah LePage, who declines.
 - 7. Albee has drawn inspiration from the idea of recording the story of UConnPIRG via the weekly Core meeting minutes, being a writer and wishing to leave a lasting legacy within the organization. He cites his experience sending emails while working on a state representative's campaign, and he believes that the organization skills he has gained through UConnPIRG will allow him to update the organizational calendar and fulfill other secretary duties.
 - 8. Ward cites her experience as a Zero Waste intern who worked with Gagnon (Vice Chair) and DeMoura on the virtual lobby day. Other

relevant experiences include being in a pre-law program with an English focus, being a staff writer for a newsletter, and gaining leadership skills via an internship and her work as a National Guard. She wants to get more student activists published to increase visibility and help build their editorial writing skills, look into research, and form a publication committee. She says her open schedule next semester should prove helpful.

9. Monticello says she can help maintain UConnPIRG's structure and integrity, and she has been working hard to become more of a leader. She cites her strong memory and listening and note-taking skills, along with her experience with reorganizing notes and practicing note-taking at Core meetings. She would also apply her strong organizational skills to updating the UConnPIRG calendar. She remains committed to the organization and wants to help its members grow.
10. Cyr cites his tenure as his high school's NHS president, alongside his ability to make campaigns more intersectional. He claims that he is not the leader that UConnPIRG needs, but he can facilitate, listen to others, and build relationships. He would use this role to bring change to the organization.
11. Hillerud asks each candidate what they would bring to the role beyond the duties outlined within UConnPIRG's constitution.
 - a) Albee would tell the UConnPIRG story on a daily (or weekly) basis. He would attend every campaign meeting and facilitate, and would submit informational blurbs to the UConn Daily Digest and *The Daily Campus* to ensure that anyone could learn about the organization.
 - b) Ward would work with research committees to promote organizational visibility and credibility via the publication of written pieces in local newspapers and *The Daily Campus*. She would also establish a presence in communities beyond Mansfield, thereby instilling more of a statewide focus.
 - c) Monticello would connect with as many organizations as possible, particularly with those that are profoundly affected by UConnPIRG's campaign initiatives. She would also distribute a newsletter to these organizations and increase visibility via pamphlets/brochures that would highlight every important on-campus development.
 - d) Cyr shares a document of one-, three-, and five-year plans, containing some of his goals for community-building. He adds that he would attract other groups to collaborate with UConnPIRG.
12. O'Hara (Chair) asks each candidate to use one word to describe their distinguishing characteristic as an executive board member.
 - a) Albee says "communicator."
 - b) Ward says "dependability."
 - c) Monticello says "perseverance."

- d) Cyr says “holistic.”
- 13. Katz (Secretary) asks each candidate how they would manage their time and balance their priorities, given the extensive commitment necessary to serve on UConnPIRG’s executive board.
 - a) Albee says he has come to realize that he needs UConnPIRG for motivation, having joined for the issues and stayed for the people. He thrives off of being busy and maintaining a high level of energy, and he claims to be able to manage everything as necessary.
 - b) Ward says her military and medic training has instructed her to pay close attention to everything. Her schedule next semester will be fairly open with entire afternoons of free time, and she says she can talk to her professors to open up even more time.
 - c) Monticello acknowledges her improving time management skills. She would be in UConnPIRG’s office as often as possible, and would create to-do lists a day in advance.
 - d) Cyr cites his strong time management skills, having consistently devoted over ten hours/week to UConnPIRG while maintaining his commitment to other clubs and a social life. He would prioritize his secretary duties, but also take on more responsibility within UConnPIRG.

Albee, Ward, Monticello, and Cyr exit WebEx at 9:29 p.m.

- 14. Core engages in closed discussion.

Albee, Ward, Monticello, and Cyr return to WebEx at 9:40 p.m.

- 15. Core members submit an online ranked-choice voting form to Gagnon (Vice Chair), Katz (Secretary), and Turano, who track the results.
- 16. Cyr is elected as UConnPIRG’s 2020-21 secretary.

V. Announcements

- A. Hillerud discusses this weekend’s east coast regional retreat, which will take place on Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. It will provide an online forum on digital organizing, among other trainings. The RSVP links and agenda will be released tomorrow. Hillerud also praises Seier for devising social media challenges for members of each campaign, which will go into effect next week. Campaign coordinators will receive an email on the matter, and there will also be discussion surrounding it within the UConnPIRG GroupMe and during campaign meetings.
- B. O’Hara (Chair) reminds Core about this Friday’s 4 p.m. planning meeting. She also asks Core to review the amended governing documents before next week’s vote.
- C. Gagnon (Vice Chair) announces that LTE trainings will be held during this week’s regional activist class on Wednesday at 6 p.m. and Thursday at 2 p.m. She declares tonight’s elections a success.
- D. O’Hara (Chair) expresses her excitement for the incoming executive officers, and encourages everyone who ran for a position to maintain their leadership and revolutionary ideas.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45pm
Minutes submitted by Michael Katz (Secretary)