

UConnPIRG Core Meeting 20-27
Monday April 13th, 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), Chad Schroeder, Shafina Chowdhury, Erin McConnell, Julia Ward, Mary Elizabeth Monticello, David Vallejo, Cheyenne Tavares, Colleen Keller, Kyleigh Hillerud, Rebecca Tripp, Venkata Patchigolla, Victor Htut, Daniella Chuka, Ben Albee, Kyle Cyr, Natalie Seier, Simon Hua, Dylan DeMoura

Guests: Justin Landry (ConnPIRG campus organizer for Trinity College)

- I. Meeting brought to order at 7:03pm by Emily O’Hara (Chair)
- II. Introductions
- III. Campaign Updates
 - A. Colleen Keller says the Hunger and Homelessness campaign has been on calls with the national team, working on the website, and is excited to work with the team.
 - B. Ben Albee on 100% states Kyle Cyr did a wonderful campaign takeover. Seven speakers have confirmed to come to the conference. Albee is proud of the research that has been done.
 - C. Cheyenne Tavares on New Voters Project: the voter toolkit will be released soon. There will be a virtual pledge next week, and she is feeling inspired because of her readings.
 - D. Shafina Chowdhury gives an update on Affordable Textbooks. Everything is online, work is in full swings, and there has been much discussion in planning meetings.
 - E. Jessica Gagnon gives the Zero Waste update, discussing a proposal on sustainability in lieu of legislative action, shares a QR code for ideas of how to stay sustainable at home, and talks on upcoming campaign action for personal sustainability.
- IV. Discussion of Racism on Campus and in Connecticut
 - A. O’Hara discusses the Culture Shock article that came out last Thursday from the Daily Campus. The article itself discusses a disturbing topic that points to a greater problem. Gagnon recommends reading it, as it is heartbreaking but representative of things happening in the country and on campus. They open the floor to discussion.
 - B. Mary Elizabeth Monticello shares a story of a Vietnamese friend, whose family experienced racism directed at them as well. Many people do not understand and we need to be listening.
 - C. Erin McConnell has been seeing it as well and has told her parents to stop referring to the coronavirus as the “Wuhan Virus,” as there is no reason to refer to it as this. One of her friends was also discussing how it would be safer for them to get the virus rather than experience racism. McConnell sees it as unjust for one’s life to be in the hands of someone that cares only for the color of your skin.

- D. Daniella Chuka describes a change in the language used in regards to Covid-19, as it is not necessarily racist language, but directed at a region when it does not have to be, as the US would not have received backlash if the virus originated from the US. This is not a new occurrence, Chuka states, as it happened to Muslim-Americans and Japanese-Americans.
 - E. Chad Schroeder states that although there is discussion on the article, UConn President Thomas Katsouleas has said there is no reason to address the problem of racism in regards to the coronavirus yet, as nothing has happened yet, despite the racist actions at UConn in the past. Schroeder also wants to think about how to do something about it not only as an individual, but a community.
 - F. Kyleigh Hillerud adds this was happening and was reported on campus before UConn shut down.
 - G. Victor Htut talks about his experiences in China last year. He is saddened by the entire people being targeted, as you cannot blame the people for their actions necessarily. Being racist towards these groups does not solve the problem, and Chinese businesses and other businesses near the region are being affected.
 - H. Chowdhury does not go on social media, although she hears discussion from those around her. It is difficult to counteract something learned on social media, as there is resistance to the WHO and CDC's expression that it is not the fault of a people, but something that happens.
 - I. Htut adds he has friends from high school who are chinese-american, and are hearing similar racist issues in China.
 - J. Natalie Seier says this is a really good time to reflect on our perspective as an American and how we think about foreigners, as the negative thoughts directed towards the Chinese would not have occurred if the virus originated from Europe.
 - K. Venkata Patchigolla is upset with rules not being followed in the US and redirecting blame to China, as you cannot blame one's culture, but you can blame one's lack of following directions.
 - L. O'Hara invites members to office hours this week to discuss a plan moving forward.
- V. Discussion of Student Worker Pay
- A. O'Hara states that Dining services are not paying students working at dining halls and opens the floor to discussion.
 - B. Albee asks for the reason the administration is not paying students, to which Gagnon replies they are not paying students who are not working and have not given a reason. Schroeder adds they were discussing a plan to pay student workers, but the head of dining services did not approve the plan.
 - C. Gagnon has still received pay, as individual dining services are able to choose to pay. Many are also not obligated to be paid, as students are still marked as dependent, and parents aren't getting \$500 since students are over sixteen.
 - D. McConnell states that student dining workers have pretty difficult jobs and maybe we are not all demanding for pay but some people need the money, as it is how they were paying for rent or something. The meal plan coverage is helpful, but it is not helping everyone. Before April 6th students like Erin were still getting paid no matter what, and that should also be applied to student dining workers.

- E. McConnell discusses the difficulty of the job working for dining services. Although not all students are demanding pay, some need the money to pay for rent, etc., as they made plans prior to the lockdown. Before April 6th students in McConnell's position were still receiving pay, which should be extended to students in dining services.
 - F. Gagnon clarifies: workers were expected to work for the rest of the semester, which affects their financial decisions. Some students stated they do not need the money, but others do. UCCO and other organizations are trying to get workers paid. Dining services have given their supervisors the ability to fight for student pay, but many have declined.
 - G. Chuka discusses how everyone has their own experiences, and knew that those higher up were not going to get paid. Daniella does not need much money and does not need it, but those that need to pay rent need to pay. And this is a slap in the face for them. She would have advocated for being paid if she had thought of that, as she did not need the money. But these workers do deserve it and they work hard and don't get paid that much more anyway.
 - H. Chuka talks of everyone having their own experience. Although she does not need the money, there are those that do and she would have advocated for those being paid.
 - I. Gagnon puts a link in the WebEx chat for those who are seeking additional information.
 - J. Schroeder opens their office hours for discussion. We should not ask for workers to single themselves out, but these students should be paid as some need the money and may not even be able to return home. UConn students still have to pay fees and Schroeder believes this is the best way the school can provide for the future of their students.
 - K. O'Hara adds that it is a work study, part of financial aid.
 - L. Gagnon mentions that the groupchat is another place to discuss.
- VI. Social Media Action
- A. Hillerud explains StudentPIRG having a bunch of campaigns on Covid-19, a great opportunity for the organization to build relationships. Hillerud offers a petition for the Trump administration to act to remove ventilator barriers for the people, and invites members to sign and tweet the petition.
 - B. Hillerud discusses how they used to use #pledgetostayhome, but is shifting to still using that hashtag, but also transitioning to #insidetogether. She adds PIRG is doing other things in relation to Earth Day.
- VII. Campaign Proposal Presentations
- A. O'Hara reminds members that vision board creation will be next week and shares the by-laws for campaign selection, adding the organization wants a mix of campus state, and local campaigns, one of which will be the lead campaign.
 - B. Rebecca Tripp presents the Hunger and Homelessness campaign proposal. She says the issue is prevalent on-campus and in surrounding communities, and it is important to continue advocating for it in light of the coronavirus pandemic. She stresses the importance of an intersectional approach alongside consistency and growth. Service projects will include volunteer trips to the Covenant Soup

Kitchen and Windham No Freeze Shelter, the support of Husky Market in collaboration with USG and the dissemination of resources pertaining to SNAP benefits. The campaign will prepare for the 2021 legislative session and continue working on its website and social media graphics and planning new awareness week events. Its mission statement will be blended with that of the New Voters Project. The campaign will continue providing service opportunities while taking an interdisciplinary approach, as it works with UCAFE, reaches out to Foodshare and the UConn Honors Program and works with administrators to provide more resources and establish an on-campus food pantry.

- C. Albee presents the Save the Earth campaign proposal. He notes that UConnPIRG has typically run multiple environmental campaigns to address different issues, but now he wants to combine these to allow more focus on New Voters Project in the fall and have a consolidated campaign for people with various environmental interests. The campaign will focus on combating special interest groups and educating students of their harmfulness. Volunteers will lobby to end UConn's Coca-Cola contract in Spring 2021, educating students on UConn's relationship with Coca-Cola and proposing alternatives. Big events will include a Green New Deal convention with other on-campus environmental groups and possibly an educational TedEx event. General goals consist of visibly rebranding the campaign, making legislative contacts, conducting a spring lobby on behalf of specific bills and focusing on environmental justice and intersectionality.
1. Chowdhury asks if the campaign will bring about any conflicting goals or initiatives. Albee says he does not anticipate any conflict.
 2. O'Hara (Chair) asks for clarification that the campaign will act as a conglomeration of previous environmental campaigns and recruit volunteers for each aspect, which Albee provides.
 3. Natalie Seier asks whether the campaign will have a lead issue or tactic each semester, or if it will maintain an equal focus on each issue. Albee says he believes the campaign can consider which issues or tactics are the most urgent each semester.
- D. Chowdhury presents the Affordable Textbooks campaign proposal. She says high-priced textbooks pose a major problem, and the campaign is working to benefit students and lessen the burden placed upon them. Short-term goals include the creation of an independent price transparency tool and of a petition to garner faculty support for open-educational resources, and in the long-term all entry-level classes at UConn should provide open-educational resources. The campaign will attempt to garner faculty and administrative support, build coalitions and spread visibility.
- E. Tavares and Victor Htut present the New Voters Project campaign proposal. Tavares says the upcoming presidential election makes 2020 a huge year for the campaign. She stresses the importance of increasing youth voter turnout, as young people make up the largest demographic yet turn out at the lowest rates. This leads to politicians ignoring the young generation's voices, which results in young people feeling more apathetic. Tavares also cites people's overexposure to politics via social media during the coronavirus pandemic as a potential deterrent to high

voter turnout. The campaign aims to streamline the voting process, making it more accessible and inviting. It will also address the need for more education by providing nonpartisan resources and discussing issues that affect everyone. Milestone goals include registering 2,500 students at UConn (and 3,100 statewide) to vote by Connecticut's October 29 voter registration deadline, generating 3,000 GOTV contacts and increasing voter turnout to 70%.

1. Htut outlines the campaign's goals pertaining to grassroots, visibility, big events, social media, campus relations and leadership development.
2. Tavares proposes New Voters Project as the statewide lead campaign, wishing to integrate the importance of voting with students' everyday lives, acquire support from staff and student power and continue UConn's promising collaboration with Trinity College.
3. Schroeder asks if the campaign's voter toolkit addresses local down-ballot roles, which Tavares confirms to be the case.
4. O'Hara (Chair) asks Tavares and Htut how they would manage the pressure of running a statewide lead campaign. Tavares says she considers it an exciting opportunity to create change. Htut agrees, adding that the presence of two coordinators should decrease burnout.

VIII. Business

A. Vote on campaign mix

1. O'Hara (Chair) motions to vote by unanimous consent on the current campaign mix.
2. Gagnon (Vice Chair) seconds.
3. Motion passes unanimously.

B. Vote on recommendation to state board

1. Second notion to state board recommendations. Discussion is opened. Hillerud states it should be NVP, as they are the only proposed statewide plan. Other campaigns do not have a reason to be the statewide campaign. Hillerud asks for other discussion if anyone disagrees with their point to which no other discussion is discussed.
2. O'Hara (Chair) motions by unanimous consent to recommend New Voters Project to the stateboard in Fall 2020.
3. Motion passes unanimously.

IX. Announcements

A. Upcoming Events

1. Schroeder discusses coffee hour photography at 10am on Wednesday and game night on Friday at 9pm, stating an information form will be sent out in regards to the events.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38pm

Minutes submitted by Kyle Cyr (Secretary-Elect)