



VOICES

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of the things I appreciate about my job here at the Center is that I have the opportunity to be involved in a variety of educational and advocacy efforts that all are in the service of promoting gender equity. Given that I am writing this after Commencement, I have the opportunity to pause and reflect on our work this semester. Those of us in higher education know that during the weeks right before break, everyone is a bit more on edge. Students are focused on finals; tensions between roommates and friends run higher; and staff and faculty are navigating supporting our students during the busiest time of the academic year for many of us. The difference between this week and the weeks leading up to the end of the semester is palpable.

I have often referred to the work of the Center as an octopus on campus – we have our tentacles in many different aspects of campus life. We work with students, staff, and faculty across a variety of disciplines and roles. This individual work with students and employees informs our advocacy around policy and protocol. This edition of *Voices* is representative of that many-faceted approach.

Inside you will find a sort of semester in review. You can meet the student staff who were new this semester and be re-acquainted with some of whom returned to us in new roles. We also highlight the various programs we hosted during the Spring, which spanned topics ranging from positive body image to implicit bias. We also included honors and recognitions that are generally part of the Commencement season. Finally, we ended the semester with some very good news – Alpha Kappa Lambda won the Ignite Challenge for the second year in a row and raised over \$8,000 for VAWPP. We are so appreciative of all of the donors who helped them achieve this goal and who support the work of the Center.

As always, I hope you find something in our newsletter that resonates with you – that speaks to an issue you care about or serves as a catalyst to get involved. Happy reading and best wishes for a rejuvenating and peaceful summer.

—Kathleen Holgerson, Women’s Center Director



The Women’s Center staff showing their support for A Day Without A Woman. Photo Credit: Women’s Center.

Inside this issue:

New Staff Spotlights	2-3
Letter From Editor/Writing Intern	4
Love Your Body	5
Implicit Bias Exhibit	5
Start Smart	6
UConn’s Lactation Policy	6
LUNAFEST	7
2 Dope Queens	7
Semester Lookback: GASA	8
ElectHer	8
Academic Achievement Awards	9
Semester Lookback: Men’s Project	10
Sexual Assault Awareness Month	11
Marcia Lieberman	12
IGNITE Challenge	12
Senior Spotlights	13-15
Poetry	16

NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

Mikayla Garvin, VAWPP Ambassador

"I am a sophomore Sociology and Communications double major from Los Angeles, CA."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"I always knew I wanted to get involved with the Women's Center. I applied for the Ambassador position because I thought it was something I could be good at while also making an impact on campus. Additionally, the Women's Center is an incredible community, and it is so amazing to be around people that share my same values and are passionate about what they do."



Lisa Famularo, Practicum Student



"I am a graduate student here at UConn in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Masters program, and I am a practicum student in the Women's Center this semester."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"As a practicum student, I'm working on assessing the career development needs of women students, faculty, and staff at UConn and creating programs/resources to address those needs. I was excited about a practicum opportunity in the Women's Center because I wanted to learn more about the role of a cultural center on campus and how various campus services can be more inclusive of marginalized populations served by cultural centers. I am thoroughly enjoying the time I spend in the Women's Center each week thanks to the amazing staff and patrons that occupy the space and make it so welcoming."

Victor Vernon, VAWPP Class Teaching Assistant



"I am a senior Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"I work at the Women's Center because I want to become a part of a larger conversation surrounding gender-based violence and listen to the experiences of those directly impacted by it. My hope is that by acquiring this knowledge, I can become a better ally and educate my peers on the realities of victim-survivors both on and off campus."

Tazmeen Akhtar, Writing Intern

"I'm currently a senior majoring in Biology and English."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"I'm a feminist so working at the Women's Center is a perfect fit for me. I knew I wanted to do an internship where I could learn more about the struggles women face and contribute toward educating others, and that's where the Women's Center came in. Going forward, I can't wait to see what else my experience at the Women's Center brings me!"



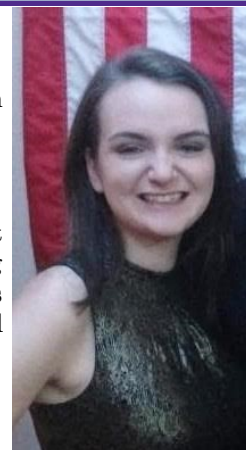
NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

Sydney Jennings, Newsletter Editor

"I am a senior Journalism major with a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor from Simsbury, CT."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"I am passionate about gender equality issues and felt that the Women's Center was the perfect place to explore those issues and be part of a team that was equally as passionate about advocating about those issue and educating the student body. Working here has taught me that everyone's voice should be heard, and gender equality is possible if we all work together to advocate and educate people about the issues."



Jenny Giri, Women's Center Assistant

"I am a sophomore majoring in English."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"I believe that despite the great strides women have made thus far, there is still a lot of work to be done to obtain gender equality. I think it's safe to say that everyone here has a common goal to make the world more fair for women, and it's so refreshing to be surrounded by likeminded individuals. It might not seem that one group of people in a large university, in an even larger country, could make such a difference, but I work here because I know that we can."



Kristina Drollinger, VAWPP Class Teaching Assistant

"I am a junior Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Human Rights double major."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

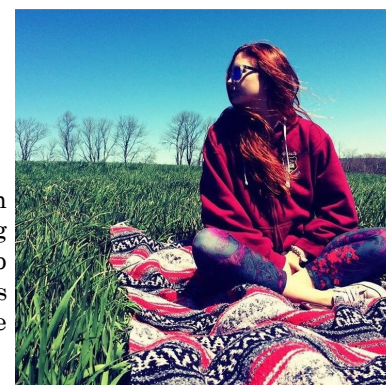
"I work at the Women's Center because I want to help educate students about gender-based violence and the importance of understanding affirmative consent. I am hopeful that we can continue to raise awareness of sexual violence to the larger UConn community and increase knowledge about ways to support survivors."

Andrea Belanger, VAWPP Ambassador

"I am a senior Political Science and Journalism double major."

Why did you choose to join the Women's Center team?

"I decided to apply to be an Ambassador for the Violence Against Women Prevention Program after working as a peer facilitator last semester. I wanted to continue working with the Women's Center because it allows me to collaborate with my peers and help educate our community about gender-based violence. The Women's Center has connected me with likeminded individuals and provided me with the tools I need to be a social activist, and I'm so thankful for that."



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



I have been thinking about the word “new” lately. The word “new” can be scary for some people because it means it’s time for change. Change can be nerve-racking for some people, I know it is for me. I am the new Newsletter Editor here at the Women’s Center, and it has been an exciting three months. On my first day, I was nervous about starting my new job and being in a whole new work environment. While I knew a little bit of background information about the Women’s Center, I came to find out there was even more I could learn. I learned more about the Women’s Center Herstory, about my coworkers, and how the Women’s Center is more than just a safe space for women, but for everyone. At the Women’s Center, we focus on equality as a whole, no matter what gender you identify with, and that is something that the student population here at the University of Connecticut should know. It seems that our country is at a point where people are not coming together, but splitting apart on various political, social, and economic issues. Because of this, achieving equality is becoming even harder and seems like a goal that is right in front of us, but we cannot reach. So, how do we, as a college community and in the larger national community, come together to fight for equality? We stick together. Here at the Women’s Center, we stick together, and if someone needs help, we help them. We need solidarity, and we need to come together to continue on this fight for gender equality and equality for all. If there is anything I have learned from change, it is that, yes, change is scary, but it is not bad. While our country is going through some changes, it does not mean it is all bad, there is still hope. I joined the Women’s Center as the Newsletter Editor to

make people aware of gender issues and to help make a difference around my campus and if people keep this goal in mind, then we can make changes.

—*Sydney Jennings*

LETTER FROM THE WRITING INTERN



I decided to join the Women’s Center after I realized almost every paper I wrote for my classes dealt with feminism and women’s issues. I realized an internship at the Women’s Center would allow me to expand my knowledge and grow, not only as a feminist, but also as an active citizen in my community. I have learned so much during the short amount of time I have been working here. I get to meet new and diverse individuals and hear their stories and opinions that allow me to broaden my own perspective. Meeting different people and writing articles on various subjects has been a truly eye opening experience. Using this, I can’t wait to apply it to my life outside the Women’s Center and the University of Connecticut. As I’m graduating in a few days, I have been doing a lot of thinking on what I want to do after graduation and how I want to live my life. I know I definitely want to be involved in the feminist movement in some capacity, even if I don’t know what that is yet. I would be disappointed in myself if I didn’t dedicate some part of my life to advocating for the rights of women. I may get a job that deals specifically with issues women face, or I might be an advocate in my own spare time. I know I still have a lot of learning left to do and hopefully my life and career after college continues to be an enriching one. No matter what I do after graduation or how I contribute towards the campaign for equality among the sexes, I am confident I have the knowledge, persistence, and dedication to make some difference in my community.

—*Tazmeen Akhtar*

LOVE YOUR BODY

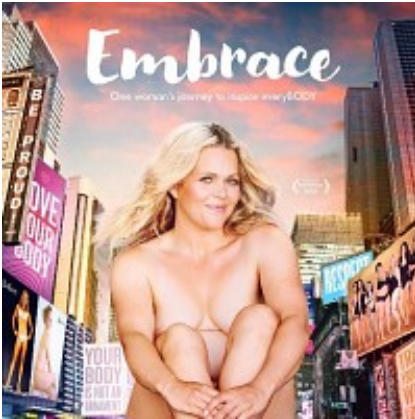


Photo Credit:
bodyimagemovement.com

On Monday February 27, the Women's Center held a film screening and discussion of the movie *Embrace* (2017). The director and producer of this documentary, Taryn Brumfitt, is an activist who explores the global issues of body image. Though an intersectional approach, she unveils how poor body image has become a worldwide epidemic. It is not all grim though. Brumfitt shows how individuals and groups can take action to create a brighter and more accepting future. This movie is a witty, gut wrenching, and above all, an inspiring film for all people. Taryn begins the film by sharing her own story. She explains how she started out life as a "body hater." After having children, she witnessed her figure changing into a shape that did not correspond with societal expectations of beauty. This propelled her onto a journey of self-acceptance. In order to encourage her friends to also learn to love their unique bodies, she posted a now famous "before and after shot," but with a twist. In her before picture was a shot of her at a bodybuilding contest, and the after picture presented her smiling wide with her body after having children. This soon went viral on Facebook and people praised her for loving her body. She also received plenty of criticism and people told her she was fat, lazy, and disgusting. This did not damage her spirit, but instead inspired Taryn to go out and interview people of different

walks of life in order to hear their journey with body image. It was especially poignant to watch as a plastic surgeon poked and prodded at Taryn's skin and breasts to illustrate everything that was "wrong" with her body. It shows how people can be treated like objects in society. The media often reinforces this notion of what the perfect women should look like, encouraging people to become more beautiful with makeup and the best diets to use in order to lose weight fast. However, surveys show that 90% of women are dissatisfied with their bodies. As a response, the director challenges beauty ideals from across the globe. This was a wonderful movie to show at the Women's Center, and the vast majority of students enjoyed hearing the different voices of people in the documentary. We heard stories from women of color, transgender people, and women with different disabilities, social class and more. It shows that although it is not easy to accept your own body at times, it is possible, and people are here to support you in your journey!

—Alyssa Marini

IMPLICIT BIAS EXHIBIT



The diverse collaborative effort of departments from across the campus and state, led by Mark Kohan, made the Implicit Bias Exhibit in Homer Babbidge Library truly unique. The goal of the exhibit is to provide students a look into their own personal biases even if they think they don't have any. The exhibit offered students a chance to look into themselves and see ingrained biases that they might not have known existed. Students can take a quiz that assesses their degree of implicit bias. The quiz would show a person that was either White or Black on the middle of the screen and ask you to associate that person with either a race or a word. However, the caveat to this assessment was that you had to go as fast as possible. You shouldn't allow yourself time to think about your answer; you had to go with your first reaction. Along with the assessment, there were also boards explaining what implicit bias was and showing real-life examples of this bias in specific fields such as education and health. At the end, students could write about the exhibit on sticky notes and share them on a white board. This exhibit was a great way for people to open themselves up and reflect on their own biases even if they did not realize they were there.

Photo Credit:
<http://thedoddcenter.uconn.edu/implicitbias/>

—Sydney Jennings, Tazmeen Akhtar

START SMART

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) recently redesigned their Start Smart workshop, and the Women's Center is excited to be continuing to offer this very important training to women students on campus. This training is designed to empower women with the skills and confidence to successfully negotiate their salary and benefits packages.

AAUW publishes a biannual report entitled *The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap*. This research monitors the pay gap for full time working women. The current national average is 80 cents to every dollar a man is paid. For women of color, the gap is even higher. The Fall 2016 report can be found at

<http://www.aauw.org/resource/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/>.

This workshop encourages participants to take inventory of their skills, knowledge and experience, and to benchmark the value of the job and benefit package they are seeking. Equipped with that information, students begin to think strategically about their approach to negotiation. Participants then have an opportunity to practice what they have learned through role plays. When women feel confident in their abilities and have objective data to support their position, they become much stronger negotiators.

This training will be offered again in the fall. Check back on our website for dates and registration information.

—*Kathy Fischer, Associate Director*



Photo Credit: AAUW.org

UConn's New Lactation Policy

This semester, UConn implemented a brand new lactation policy for breastfeeding mothers. As of December 20, 2016, employees and students of the University of Connecticut are guaranteed a lactation area and lactation breaks so they can breastfeed in a suitable environment. The policy, which is in accordance with state laws regarding breastfeeding in the workplace, states the lactation area is a space that is "either dedicated or temporarily established to accommodate the needs of those who are breastfeeding." The area must be clean and private and free from intrusion. Furthermore, the area is required to contain a chair, a table, an electrical outlet, and nearby access to clean running water. These areas are guaranteed to be within five minutes of a breastfeeding woman's work or study area, making it very easy to breastfeed/pump on all UConn campuses and UConn Health. Not only are employees and students guaranteed lactation areas, they are also given lactation breaks with the implementation of the new policy. Women can legally have multiple breaks throughout their workday specifically to breastfeed. As of now, there are ten locations on the Storrs Campus, one location at the Stamford campus, and one location at UConn Health, that are designated lactation areas. The Women's Center's conference room at the Storrs campus doubles as a lactation area which can be reserved by calling the center or by filling out a reservation form through the [website](#). Women are encouraged to visit the Women's Center on the fourth floor of the Student Union if they need to breastfeed, and they are guaranteed a clean and private area where they can do so. With 77% of infants breastfeeding in the U.S. (cdc.gov), there is definitely a big need for a lactation policy. Women will never need to breastfeed or pump in unhygienic conditions while on UConn campuses. No woman should be breastfeeding in unsanitary conditions such as bathrooms, and this policy ensures that no woman at UConn will have to.

—*Tazmeen Akhtar*

LUNAFEST

At the beginning of April, the Women's Center held its annual short film festival, LUNAFEST at the Dodd Center. LUNAFEST is advertised as being a travelling short films festival "by, for, and about women." This film festival holds screenings in more than 180 cities and to date it has showcased nearly 186 filmmakers. This event is the primary fundraising event for the Women's Center. The main sponsors this year were Mansfield OBGYN, New England Altrusa, League of Women Voters of Connecticut, and AAUW Storrs/Willimantic chapter. 15% of all proceeds go to the Breast Cancer Fund, an organization dedicated to identifying and promoting the elimination of the environmental causes of breast cancer. The remaining 85% of the proceeds are allocated for the Women's Center. They are used to support the Women's Center's gender equity programming and its student staffing costs. There were a total of nine short films that were shown this year ranging between four minutes and fifteen minutes. The films covered a wide array of topics ranging from movies about family life, the challenges a girl faces in a refugee camp, the struggles nannies must deal with and many more! Lisa Famularo, a graduate student and one of the student workers at the Women's Center shares her favorite film from the festival, *Free to Laugh* by Lara Everly. As Famularo describes, this film is about "how women who have been incarcerated can use comedy, taught to them in a structured program, as a tool to aid their transition back into society and their overall mental health. There seems to be a widely held belief that incarcerated folks, including women, will forever be different, but this film really focused on dispelling that belief and showing that these women have just as much to contribute to society as the rest of us." The purpose of LUNAFEST is to feature films which empower women, show diversity in the films they show, raise money for charity, and leave a lasting impact on viewers, and this year, just like years in the past, it accomplished its mission.

—Tazmeen Akhtar



Photo Credit:
UConn Women's
Center

2 DOPE QUEENS



Photo Credit: www.WNYC.org

This year, the Women's Center was proud to invite 2 Dope Queens to come and perform for the student body at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. 2 Dope Queens is a duo comprised of Phoebe Robinson and Jessica Williams. Robinson and Williams are famous for their comedic podcast produced by WNYC Studios in which they discuss everything from romance to race to living in New York City. As soon as the duo stepped onto the stage at Jorgensen, they brought great energy and positive vibes with them. They had a pretty unique style, different from other comedians. Rather than just doing stand up and looking out at the audience, they performed as if they were recording a podcast. They would carry out a conversation between each other and include the audience in their dialogue. Although this was a different type of performance, it was successful because of the witty banter the two had going on between each other. This banter allowed the audience to sit back and watch the two of them talking about their college days, their careers, and their romantic lives. One of the best parts of the show was towards the end, when the duo carved out twenty minutes to do a Q&A with the audience members. They addressed many different questions, ones that got everyone to think and engage with each other. They addressed serious questions about race, sexuality, and gender and more humorous ones such as what annoyed them about each other. All in all, it was a pleasure to be able to attend a performance by 2 Dope Queens. As Salonie Dave, a huge fan of the theirs remarked, "the UConn Community was beyond blessed that the Women's Center brought 2 Dope Queens to our campus. Phoebe and Jessica, the Dope Queens, were hilarious, relatable, and inclusive in their comedic approach."

—Tazmeen Akhtar

SEMESTER LOOKBACK: GASA

The goal of Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) is to train members of fraternities and sororities here at UConn so they can positively influence their peers by challenging social norms that promote gender-based violence, understand their connection to survivors of gender-based violence and learn how to be a role model of effective bystander interventions. The group focuses on topics such as gender, privilege, social justice and how to stop sexual assault and interpersonal violence within the Greek community.

Participant Lindsey Vieweg had this to say about her semester with GASA, "I was honored to be chosen as a participant for GASA. This experience has helped me grow in an immense number of ways. Although I consider myself well informed about rape culture, I learned many new things about gender-based violence and privilege in general. I was surprised by all the types of privilege I have compared to many of my peers. GASA was a safe space to discuss sexual assault and the impact it has on an individual, family and community. This organization helped me deal with issues that I was not comfortable discussing with many people. The environment was welcoming and every participant was an active listener. GASA helped me prepare to help others who may have been victim-survivors of sexual assault as well as educate me on how to prevent further sexual assaults. It was well worth the time and dedication needed to be actively involved. I am proud to have participated in a program as amazing as GASA."

Another participant, Cassandra Franco-Camacho, also enjoyed her time with GASA and had this to say, "Getting involved with GASA was a great way to be an active participant in combatting rape culture on UConn's campus. I learned a lot about myself during the ten weeks, but also about the views and opinions of my fellow members. Everyone's contributing opinions helped to shape a future vision that students have for the issue of sexual assault and how to continue to learn the effective ways of trying to prevent it. I feel like I now have the training I need in order to construct critical conversations about the topic, and also about what I can do as a member of the Greek community to make people feel safe and informed."

ELECT HER

The Women's Center's annual *Elect Her* campaign training took place on Friday, February 3rd. This half-day workshop teaches college women how to run a campaign and win student government positions at their school. The training also aims to prepare young women for future political careers and other leadership positions within their community. Furthermore, the specific focus for the training is to increase the number of women of color who serve on the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and other elected positions both on and off campus; the number of women in leadership positions on USG; and to work to change the climate for women in USG and other elected offices.

This year's keynote speaker was Connecticut State Senator Mae Flexer who was sworn-in to the state Senate in January 2015. Before becoming a State Senator, she served three terms in the Connecticut House of Representatives representing Killingly and Plainfield. Senator Flexer has been one of the legislatures leading proponents regarding violence against women including helping lead the passage of *An Act Concerning Sexual Assault, Stalking and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus* which mandated college campuses to provide services to victims, organize sexual assault policies, and report incidents to the state General Assembly. Senator Flexer took questions from the students about her time as a senator, the current political climate after the election of President Trump, and what it is like to be a woman in government. Senator Flexer [came back to UConn](#) on Thursday, April 27th to speak with the [all-women](#) Tier III organization leaders about being women in leadership roles on campus.



—Sydney Jennings

Photo Credit:
Runningstartonline.org

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Every year, the Provost's Office, Alumni Relations, and the Women's Center sponsor the Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony. This program recognizes women undergraduate and graduate students who have excelled academically within each school and college and demonstrates high achievement in research and service to the UConn community. In addition, it celebrates the recipients of the 100 Years of Women Scholarship, which was established in 1992 to honor current matriculated UConn undergraduate and graduate students or a high school senior planning to enroll at the University, who have demonstrated a commitment to women's issues through service to their community or school as a role model or advocate. A reception is held in their honor during Commencement weekend. Below is the list of the awards, recipients, and the school/college they belong to.

Award	Recipient	School/College
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Megan Teresa Mitchell	School of Pharmacy
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Jenna Marie Balogh	Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Caitlin Porter	College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Margo Bailey	School of Business
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Kelsey Ann Iwanicki	Neag School of Education
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Lauren Biernacki	School of Engineering
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Morgan Taylor Kirolo	School of Fine Arts
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Aiden Ford	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Samantha Lawrence	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Sarah Shea	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Camille Van Allen	School of Nursing
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Sarah Vitale	Graduate School
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Ashley E. V. Palma	School of Law
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Carolyn Bradford	School of Dental Medicine
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Kristen Russomanno	School of Medicine
Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award	Lisa Yagaloff	School of Social Work
100 Years of Women Scholarship	Alani Leahn Arias	
100 Years of Women Scholarship	Megan Handau	
100 Years of Women Scholarship	Ellie Miske	

SEMESTER LOOKBACK: THE MEN'S PROJECT

The Men's Project is supported by the Women's Center and the Asian American Cultural Center whose staff and advisors work to train students who are men to challenge social norms that promote gender-based violence, understand their connection to survivors of gender-based violence, and to be positive role models in effective bystander interventions. The participants filled out a survey during their time in the Men's Project. Here are a few quotes from the survey:

"I've learned to calm down and really listen and empathize and realized I've been in a relatively privileged position my whole life. I've also realized I might not have approached my LGBTQ+ and survivor friends in the most productive way."

"I feel that this program is very effective at achieving its goals. There hasn't been one activity that didn't make me leave different from how I came."

"I really like the program and the content we've covered through activities."

"My biggest takeaways have been about empathy and examining my role and experiences as a man in society—both long journey's that I wanted to continue learning about through this."

"My biggest takeaway was being able to see rape culture and sexism in my everyday life."

"I've learned about understanding the perspectives and emotions of others. Also, how ingrained with aspects of masculinity we can be without really understanding and/or noticing it."

The logo for the Men's Project features a large, stylized, black serif letter 'M' on the left. To the right of the 'M', the words 'EN'S PROJECT' are written in a smaller, black, all-caps serif font. The 'M' is significantly larger than the other text, and its right side overlaps with the 'EN'S'.

Photo Credit: UConn Men's Project

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and the Women's Center held numerous events including Take Back the Night and *Masculinity: An Imaginary Friend*. Take Back the Night was held on Wednesday, April 12th and was hosted by the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). The event helps promote the awareness of gender-based violence. The night started with performances from Drop the Bass and Praise Dance Ministry and student speakers from Greeks Against Sexual Assault, the Men's Project, and VAWPP. Then, participants made a solidarity march around campus with signs promoting gender-based violence prevention and then came back to the Student Union Ballroom for a speak-out where survivors were encouraged to tell their stories in a safe space, support survivors and work through the healing process. The Women's Center hosted former National Football League athlete Wade Davis in his lecture titled *Masculinity: An Imaginary Friend* in partnership with UConn Athletics, the Rainbow Center, the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life, and Sports Management. Davis discussed his time in the NFL being a black male gay athlete and how that shaped his experiences. Davis also talked about how traditional messages about masculinity contribute to homophobia and rape culture.



Mary Olmsted and Banu Bayraktar, Women's Center employees, stand with a sign promoting consent.

Photo Credit: Mary Olmsted



The theme of the night was "We Rise," with these T-shirts displaying the phoenix.

Photo Credit: UConn HerCampus



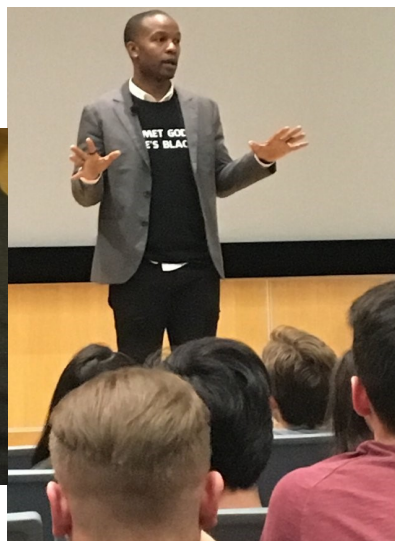
Women's Center employees painted the rock on campus to promote the event and bring awareness to gender-based violence.

Photo Credit: Women's Center Twitter



The Praise Dance Ministry Performance dancing at the beginning of the event.

Photo Credit: Jon Sammis/*The Daily Campus*



Wade Davis, writer, activist, and educator speaking to a room full of students.

Photo Credit: Women's Center Twitter



Members of GASA speak at the beginning of Take Back the Night.

Photo Credit: UConn HerCampus

DR. MARCIA LIEBERMAN

Marcia Lieberman was a UConn English professor and active feminist whose advocacy work contributed to getting women access to the fieldhouse, athletic scholarships for women, and UConn's first Women's Literature class. In December, Dr. Lieberman agreed to tell her story to the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department and the Women's Center, marking her first contact with UConn since 1974. Dr. Lieberman began teaching in UConn's English Department in 1967. She was active in the Women's Liberation Movement. She joined a women's liberation consciousness-raising group, where she and other women in the community discussed gender and women's experiences. There she met Wendy Chapple, who was planning an initiative to get women access to the Field House, which at the time had no facilities for women. A group formed around the movement, calling themselves the Organization of Professional and Faculty Women ("The Org"). The Org approached the Director of Athletics, the ACLU, and the University President. With perseverance, they got a women's locker room installed in the Field House. Following demand by student activists, Dr. Lieberman taught UConn's first Black Literature class in the late 1960s. She advocated for a Women's Literature class, and taught the first sections, along with colleague Joan Hall. Around this time, The Org did a statistical study on the status of women at UConn in an effort to raise awareness of women's issues on campus. Later, tenured professors would agree that the study was a risky move for the untenured Dr. Lieberman. Dr. Lieberman was denied tenure in 1972, despite having published the same number of articles as several tenured men in the department. The tenure decision was protested by student activists, who staged a sit-in of the acting President's office. Dr. Lieberman appealed the tenure decision, but ultimately lost her subsequent lawsuit against the University. While she had to leave UConn, the impact of Dr. Lieberman's advocacy work is visible today, and her legacy of activism is alive in UConn's feminist community.

—Alex Dutro-Maeda

IGNITE CHALLENGE

Alpha Kappa Lambda is proud to announce that for the second year in a row, our organization has won the UConn Foundation's "IGNITE" crowdfunding challenge and raised a total of \$8,321.93 for the Women's Center and the Violence Against Women Prevention Program! Thank you to all who donated—we could not have done it without the collective effort of UConn students, family, and friends. The brothers of Alpha Kappa Lambda had a lot of fun this year (check out our Polar Plunge!) and we look forward to working closely with the Women's Center in the coming semesters through fundraising efforts such as IGNITE, our "These Hands Don't Hurt Campaign," and AKL's annual Fall Carnival, as well as Women's Center programs such as VAWPP and GASA. Once again, thank you to all who donated. Your contributions have a direct impact on making the UConn community a safer environment and empowering women.

—Trevor Phillips



Photo Credit: Alpha Kappa Lambda

Ignite

s.uconn.edu/AKL

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS

Congratulations to all of our graduating seniors!



Salonie Dave

My time at UConn has been filled with incredibly rewarding moments, and my one regret is not joining the Women's Center sooner. I am almost finished with my Bachelor of Science in Physiology and Neurobiology, with minors in Human Rights and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I am hoping to pursue medical school at some point in the future, but I know wherever life takes me, I will always keep in mind the lessons learned through working at the Women's Center. Being a facilitator for Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) has been one of my most challenging yet rewarding experiences at UConn, as it empowered me to develop patience and empathy all while approaching the heavy topic of gender-based violence. I have grown immensely through my time with the Women's Center, and will cherish the memories I made as I continue through this crazy journey through life. And I will leave you with this quote..."Be patient when you go thru trials and tribulations." –Rodney Purvis via Twitter .



Mary Olmsted

I am graduating with a degree in Communications and with a minor in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The past four years have been the best of my life and that is because I have been at UConn. The people I have met and the organizations I have gotten involved with have made me into the person I am today. Working at the Women's Center has been an amazing experience because I have been surrounded by people who are all working towards the same goal. In addition to working at the Women's Center, I am also the President of the Residence Hall Association, and I am a Designer at Nutmeg Publishing. Being a student leader on the UConn campus has been one of the most rewarding experience I have ever had.



Aiden Ford

I'm a Physiology and Neurobiology and Neurodevelopment and Health double major, Anthropology and Neuroscience double minor, from Bethel CT. In July, I'll start a 2-year research fellowship at the Marcus Autism Center in Atlanta, studying developmental social cognition. My favorite part of working at the Women's Center is the amazing community of people here, as well as the opportunity to critically evaluate our campus climate and practices. I've worked in the Fitch Lab of Behavioral Neuroscience for three years, and am on the leadership teams for TEDxUConn and the Pre-Medical Society. I described my UConn experience in one word the other day as unexpected, but I've loved nearly every minute of these past four years, and I will definitely be teary-eyed on graduation day.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS



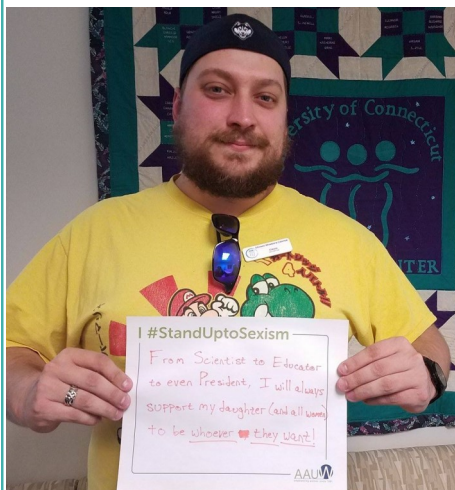
Annie Belanger

I am graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Journalism. Throughout my time at UConn, I have met the most incredible people and shared so many amazing and transformative experiences. Working at the Women's Center has helped me grow as a feminist and has given me the tools I need to be an activist in my community. I am so thankful for the beautiful network of people that I have found through the Women's Center, and I cannot imagine my college experience without them. In addition to working at the Violence Against Women Prevention Program, I am a blogger for Her Campus UConn and a competitor for UConn's Moot Court Competition Team. After graduating in May, I will be continuing my education here at UConn to receive a Master's Degree in Public Law.



Chelsea Meagher

I am pursuing my degree in Cognitive Science with a minor in Neuroscience. These past four years at UConn have been a wonderful experience, full of intellectual and personal growth. Working at the Women's Center taught me how to be a better feminist while empowering me to make a difference in my community. It was so rewarding to work with strong and intelligent peers while at the Women's Center, and I'm truly grateful for every single person I've met throughout my UConn journey. There are no words to describe how grateful I am to have been able to go to college. Thank you all for the best four years of my life! Aside from the Women's Center, I was also involved in research at the UConn Child Language Lab and UConn Auditory Brainstem Response Lab. My senior thesis project was focused on relating child language development to how well their brain processes sound and how this relationship may be different in children with an autism spectrum disorder. I'm also excited to announce that my research was accepted to present at the International Meeting for Autism Research in San Francisco. Once I graduate, I anticipate working in a clinical research setting. I'm really interested in brain imaging and Alzheimer's Disease.



Craig Alejos

I am getting my undergraduate degree in Human Development and Family Studies and will be getting my graduate degree at UConn in Human Development and Family Studies with a focus on close relationships. The Women's Center has been at the epicenter of the discovery that we're supposed to experience in college. Even being a non-traditional student, I continue to realize every day that there is more to learn, especially when it comes to gender equity. It has been an honor and a privilege to work for and with one of the greatest groups of people I've ever known. I just ask that everyone remember that self-care is important. This work can be draining and if you let it fill your life completely, it can be defeating. Take time for yourself and remember that there are many others in the world fighting the same fight we are. Think of it as maintenance on your armor; the armor that protects you and keeps you going day in and day out. If you don't take the time to make repairs or keep it up, it will be easily broken. Your body and soul are that armor. Make sure you take care of it.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS

Castella Copeland



I am a senior getting a degree in Political Science, Human Rights and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with a minor in Urban and Community Studies. Throughout my time here at UConn I have had an amazing journey of meeting new people, having good times with some of my high school friends who go here and getting into new experiences with a ton of organizations. The people I have met at the Academic Achievement Center as an AAC Coach, the people I have worked with in Residential Life, UConn Model United Nations, the Figure Skating team and the Women's Center have all helped me grow and develop into who I am now. Coming into UConn, I embarked on a new path with an open mind of starting fresh. As I look back at these four years, so much has happened that has allowed me to learn more about myself in the most authentic and creative way. A large part of this was due to the Women's Center where I got to learn more about feminism and intersectionality, the AAC where I got to learn how to transform my time management and study skills, and with Residential Life in developing professional skills. Although I will miss the times I had, I will always take them with me through the community of practice, and I will continue to develop my goals in higher education and political activism through art.

Brianna Devivo



I'm excited to be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with a minor in Middle Eastern Studies. Working at the Women's Center has been fundamental to my experience at UConn. I helped organize Elect Her, which encourages young women to run for student government and public office. After attending Elect Her my sophomore year, being able to organize this and watch other young women learn about how to campaign and lead with confidence has been amazing. Aside from working at the Women's Center, my experiences at UConn have taken me to Perugia, Italy through study abroad, to the White House in the Office of First Lady Michelle Obama as a correspondence intern, and to serving on two executive boards as the President of the UConn College Democrats and the VP of Collegiate Recruitment Information for my sorority Alpha Chi Omega. Yet my time here at UConn would not be half of what it was without the Women's Center. I'm forever grateful to the feminist leaders and peers I worked with and learned from. Nothing is more empowering than working with a group of feminists who challenge and motivate you. I hope to carry this knowledge with me as I hope to work in politics and government, advocating for feminist policies, and eventually obtaining a Masters in Public Policy.

Tazmeen Akhtar



I will be graduating this May with a BA in Biology and English. I am currently the writing intern at the Women's Center and a site manager for the English as a Second Language program through Community Outreach. These past four years at UConn have changed and influenced me in ways I never would have thought possible. Through meeting new people, making new friends, and joining organizations I am passionate about, I have learned so much about myself and my community. I have learned to be independent, assertive, and unapologetically myself. I have been a part of experiences I never thought I would be involved in, such as going skydiving and being interviewed for a podcast to name a few. I will forever be grateful for my experience here at UConn, both the bad times and the good times, because they have changed me in great ways, and I am so happy to be able to say that I will soon be a UConn alumna.

POETRY BY CASTELLA COPELAND

True Beauty

I wear the make-up as a mask of beauty
 Hiding the real me thinking I have
 cooties
 With scars and bumps as round as my
 booty
 That I have been graciously gifted with
 And yet feel so cursed for not having
 beauty.
 I wear the make-up as a mask of beauty
 One that is widely accepted and
 encouraged
 One that dolls wear and angles swear
 That God gave it to them without
 needing repair
 And yet feel so cursed for not having
 beauty
 I wear the make-up as a mask of beauty
 Despite all the curious conjecture
 About my face being that of confidence
 Showing the plastic courage cunningly
 cool
 And yet feel so cursed for not having
 beauty
 I wear the make-up as a mask of beauty
 To hide all of the pain and continuity
 That dwells inside and becomes a
 commodity
 The world is cruel, made of cake or death
 And yet feel so cursed for not having
 beauty

Diet Racism; How to Make Lots of Kindness

I wear the mask of red white and blue
 Wishing that we the people who bleed red
 and not blue
 Can stop feeling blue and turning white
 from the fright
 Of those sirens of red white and blue
 With the words written in blood
 And the music too blue I turn into a white
 doll
 Made of porcelain made to break when the
 silence falls
 But if I break, and see color and get skin as
 light as butter
 Or skin like peanut butter I will be fat not
 for my size
 But for the skin that expands around the
 glutton called greed
 That is the seed to plant grief and sorrow so
 deep it poisons the well
 To make everyone into a reusable dolls
 birthed everyday
 So why not use the lighter ones instead of
 the darker ones
 Since the whiter ones are easier to fix since
 the shade of my skin
 Matters more than the shade of the tree I
 sit under cooling off from
 A hard day's work not knowing when some-
 one will recognize me
 And give credit where credit is due starting
 with the roots of my tree
 To let them see how the apple seed
 produces more in the fruit that
 Are not my children to be consumed and
 reused, but rather to
 Nourish the soul of the departed past
 Walking the menu of dissatisfaction

Ethereal Waves

When the leaves meet the sand
 Nuggets of hope can be panned
 out
 Into the plan of action;
 A transaction of micro
 movements
 Leading conflicting emotions
 Growing from the ashes of
 burned pieces
 We refused to notice until they
 became ashes;
 But I too am growing.
 Constructing buildings created
 from my ashes
 I'm enjoying people more for
 the moment
 Instead of the longevity but it's
 still hard.
 Souls energy is creative
 So how much would I give up
 To fly and be endlessly happy
 like how I used to be?
 Remembering who I was and
 how all of the lives and
 Character developments of
 who I am; shadows of my foot-
 steps from my ghosts past life I
 live to tell the tale today.